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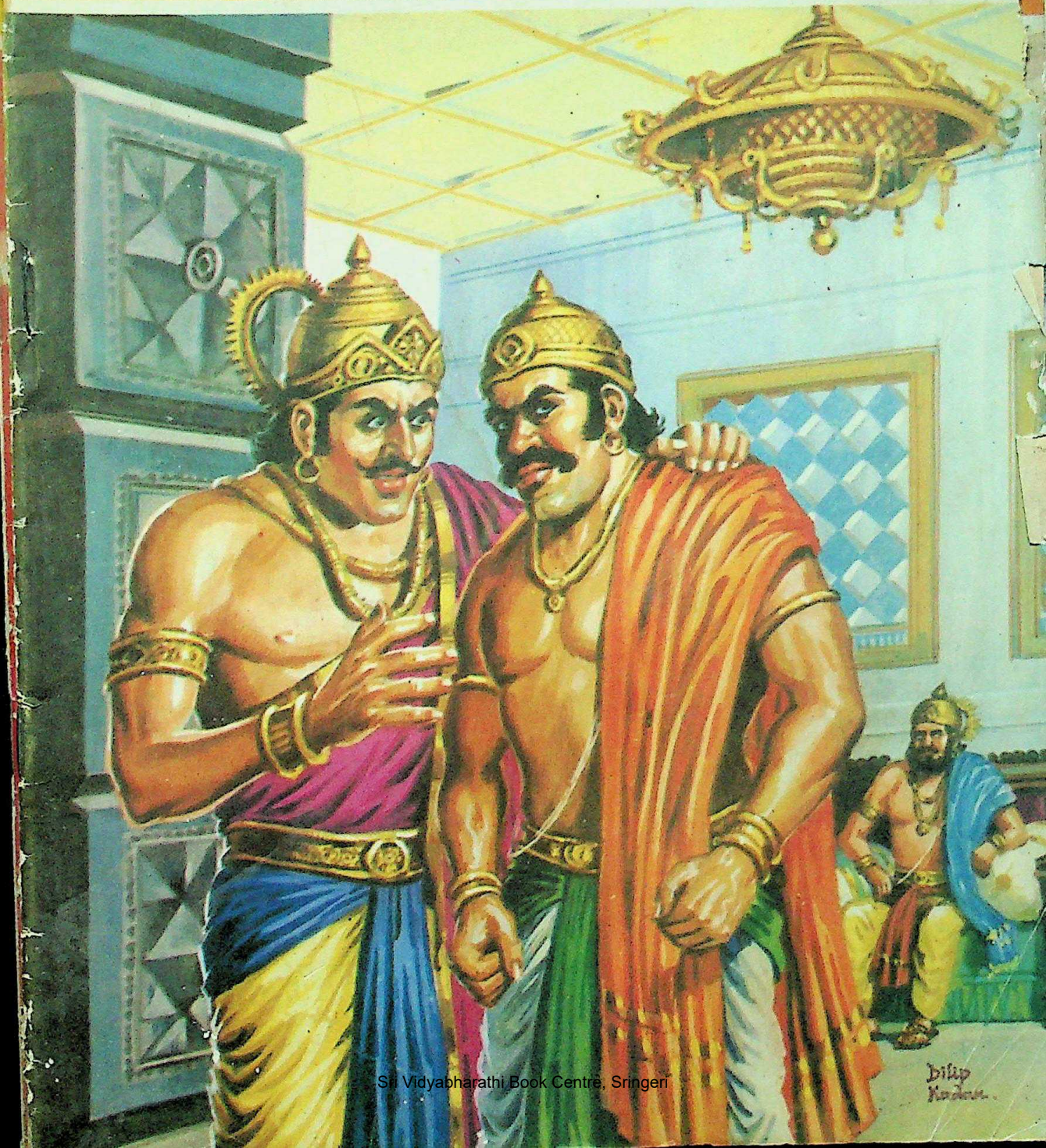
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No. 341 Rs. 4/-

Mahabharata – 7

THE CONSPIRACY



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MAHABHARATA

The Mahabharata is the longest epic known to man. It is also what may be called the total epic because, besides being a literary classic, it is a supreme work of philosophy and an exhaustive manual of morals and manners.

The origin of the Mahabharata is shrouded in mystery. Countless scholars have pried into the work to discover the personality of its author, Veda Vyasa, to pin down its date of composition, and to analyse its historical veracity. But doubts still persist on all these counts.

Was it possible for one person to compose over a hundred thousand verses? Handed down by oral tradition, was the Mahabharata written down in 800 B.C. or 600 B.C. or 300 B.C.? Can the levels of Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware, or the names of present-day cities and plains, or the radio-carbon tests of excavated materials, vouch for its historicity? There is no conclusive answer.

The core of the tale – the feud between the princely cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, leading to the eighteen-day-long bloody war – must have had its roots in some real event. The text with its available recensions points to three oral versions : the first as recited by Veda Vyasa himself, the next as recited by his disciple Vaishampayana to Janamejaya, and the third as narrated again by one Sauti, who had heard Vaishampayana's recital. Additions and interpolations must have crept in at various times, till the advent of the printing-press and standard editions.

For this series, we have referred to the following works:

1. Mahabharata – Sanskrit text with a Hindi translation by Pandit Ramnarayandutt Shastri Pandey ("RAM"), published by Geeta Press, Gorakhpur.

2. Shri Mahabharatam – Translated into Malayalam verse, by Kunjikuttan Tampuran, and published by S.P.C.S., Kottayam.

3. The Mahabharata – Translated into English prose by Pratap Chandra Roy, and published by Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.

4. The critical edition brought out by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.

OUR FORTHCOMING TITLES:

October 1, 1985
BATTLE OF WITS

October 15, 1985
Mahabharata-8 THE ESCAPE

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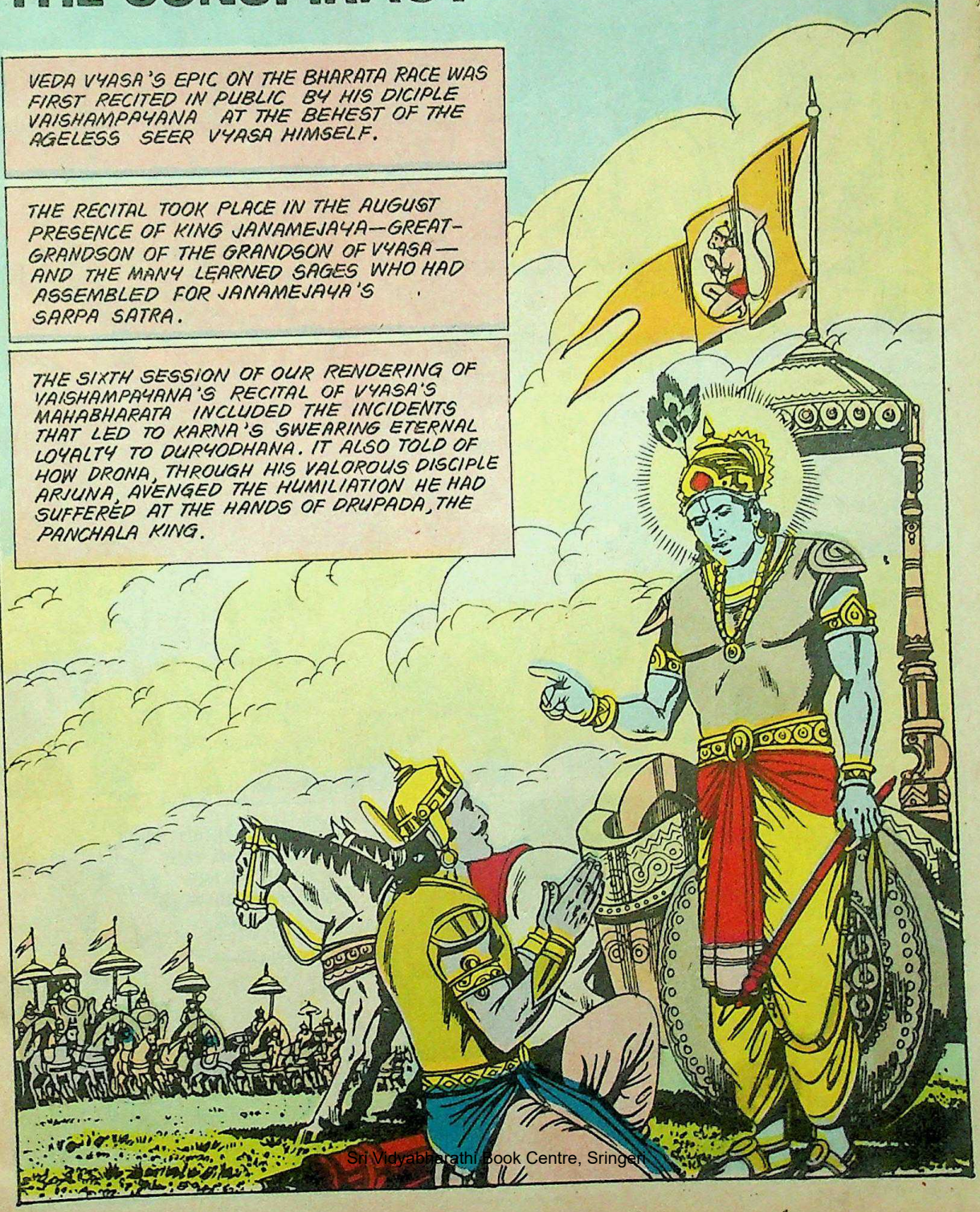
Mahabharata–7

THE CONSPIRACY

VEDA VYASA'S EPIC ON THE BHARATA RACE WAS FIRST RECITED IN PUBLIC BY HIS DICIPLE VAISHAMPAYANA AT THE BEHEST OF THE AGELESS SEER VYASA HIMSELF.

THE RECITAL TOOK PLACE IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF KING JANAMEJAYA—GREAT-GRANDSON OF THE GRANDSON OF VYASA—AND THE MANY LEARNED SAGES WHO HAD ASSEMBLED FOR JANAMEJAYA'S SARPA SATRA.

THE SIXTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S MAHABHARATA INCLUDED THE INCIDENTS THAT LED TO KARNA'S SWEARING ETERNAL LOYALTY TO DURYODHANA. IT ALSO TOLD OF HOW DRONA, THROUGH HIS VALOROUS DISCIPLE ARJUNA, AVENGED THE HUMILIATION HE HAD SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF DRUPADA, THE PANCHALA KING.



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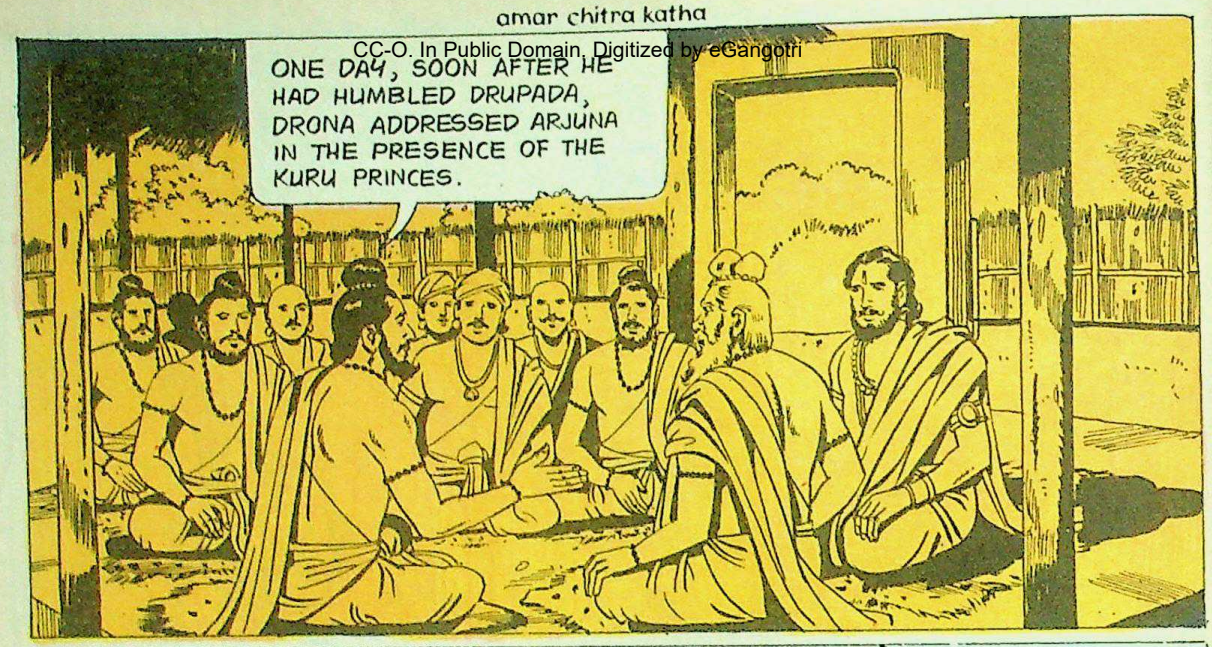

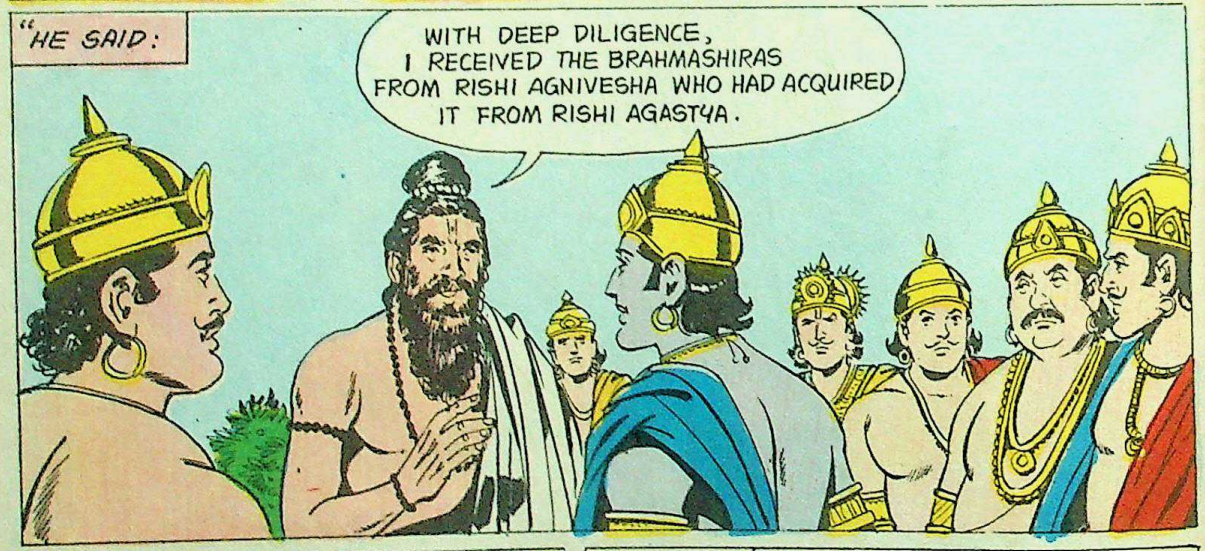

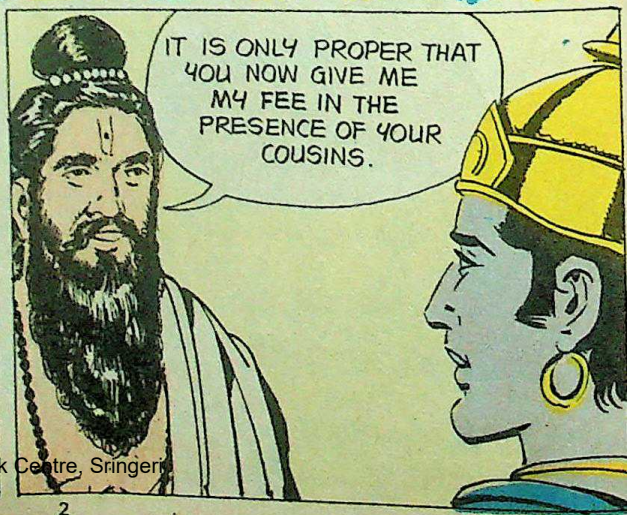

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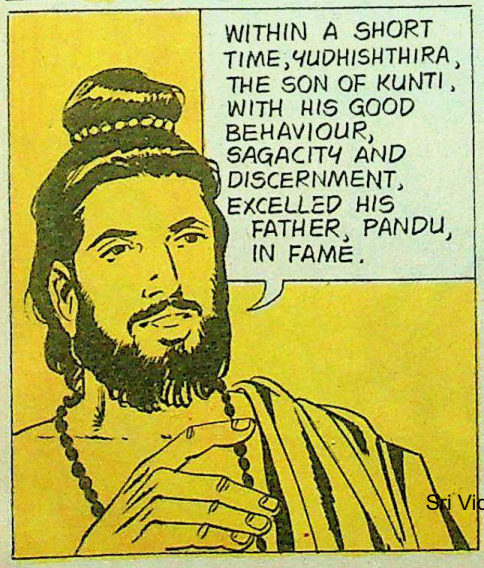
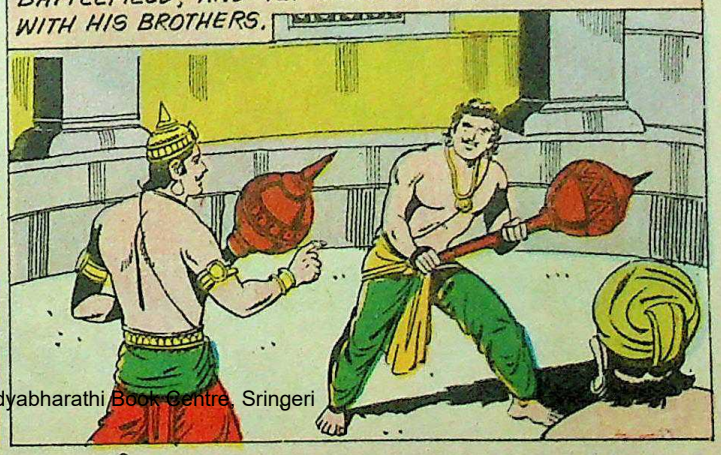
"WHEN ARJUNA GAVE HIS ASSENT THE GURU SAID:

IF EVER I ENGAGE YOU IN COMBAT YOU MUST FIGHT WITH ME — WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION.

"AND A YEAR AFTER DRONA HAD HUMBLED DRUPADA, DHRITARASHTRA HAVING OBSERVED YUDHISHTHIRA TO BE FIRM, YET TOLERANT AND SCRUPULOUSLY HONEST, INSTALLED HIM AS THE HEIR-APPARENT.



"BHEEMA, THE SECOND PANDAVA, TOOK INSTRUCTIONS FROM BALARAMA IN WIELDING THE SWORD AND THE MACE, AND IN STEERING THE CHARIOT IN THE BATTLEFIELD; AND YET LIVED IN PEACEFUL ACCORD WITH HIS BROTHERS.



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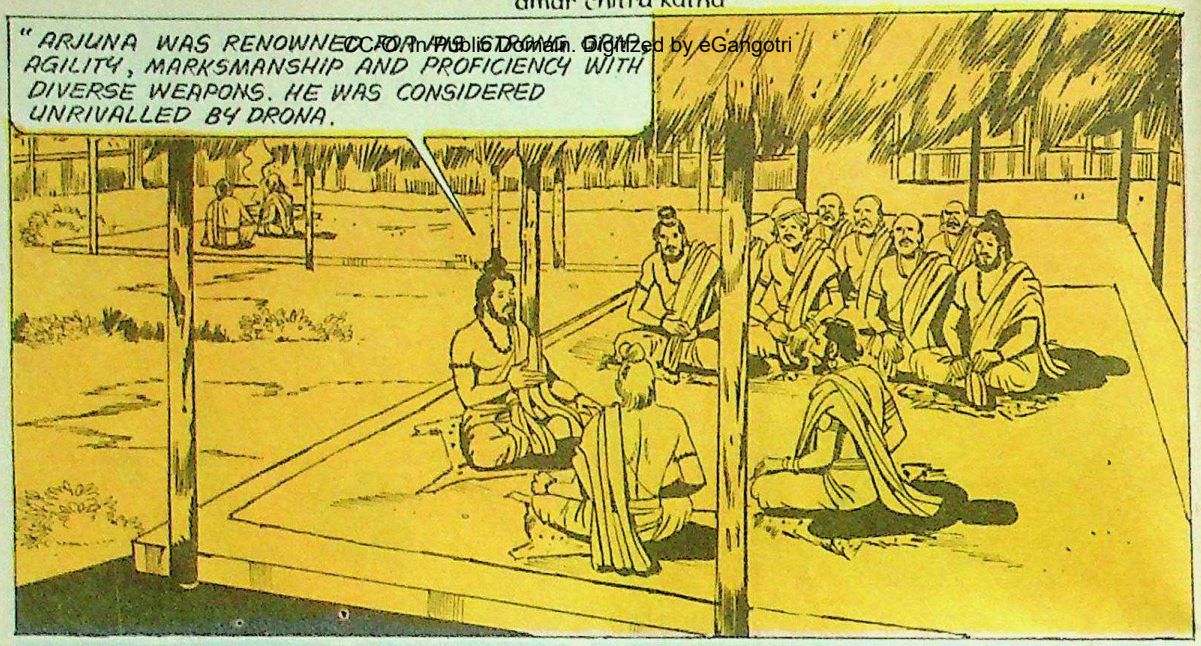

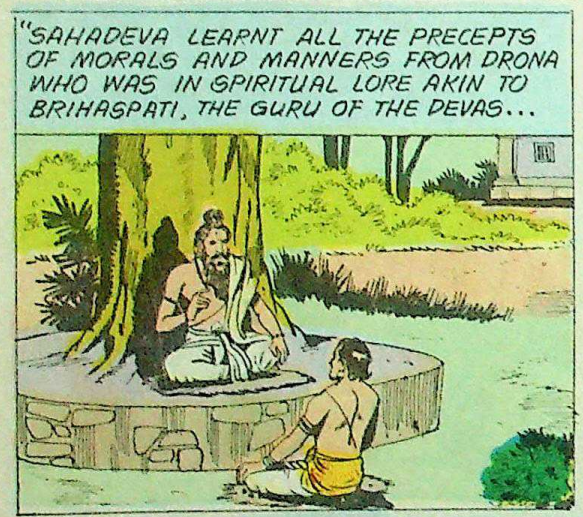

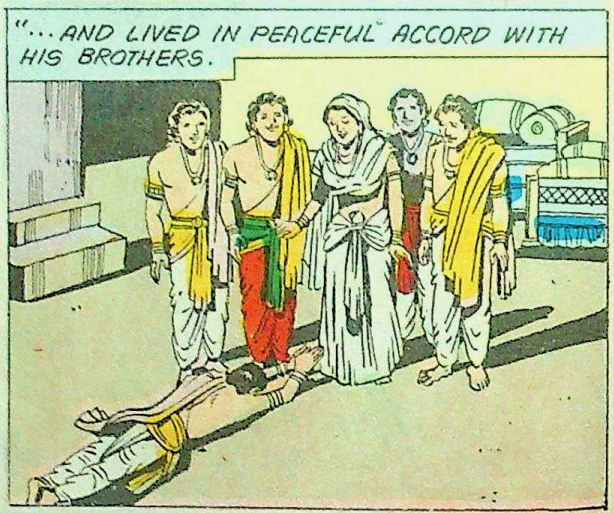

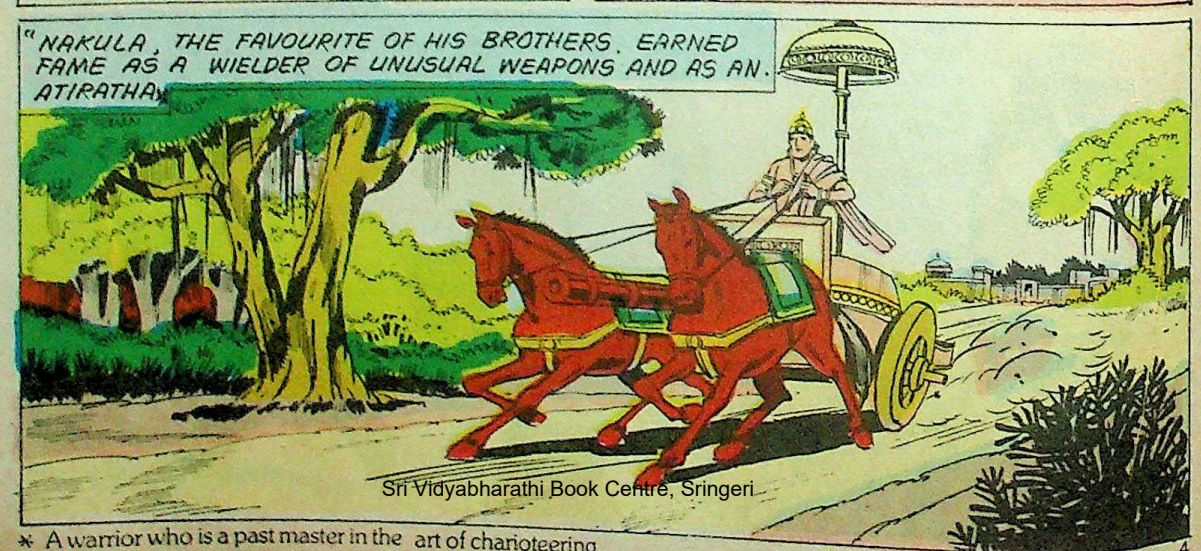

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* A warrior who is a past master in the art of charioteering.

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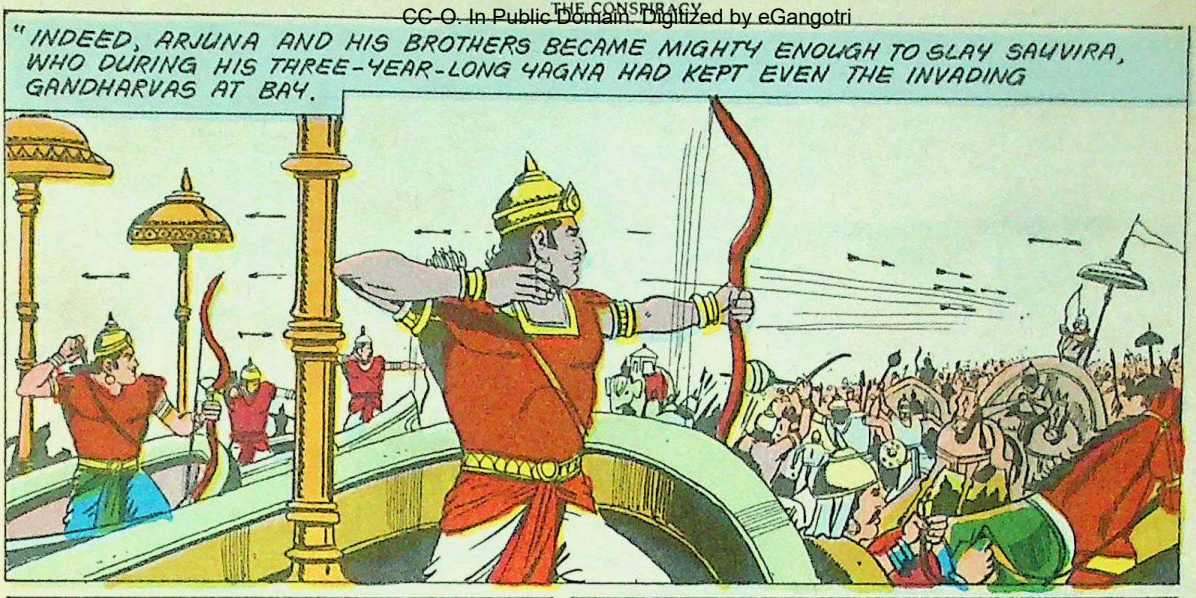

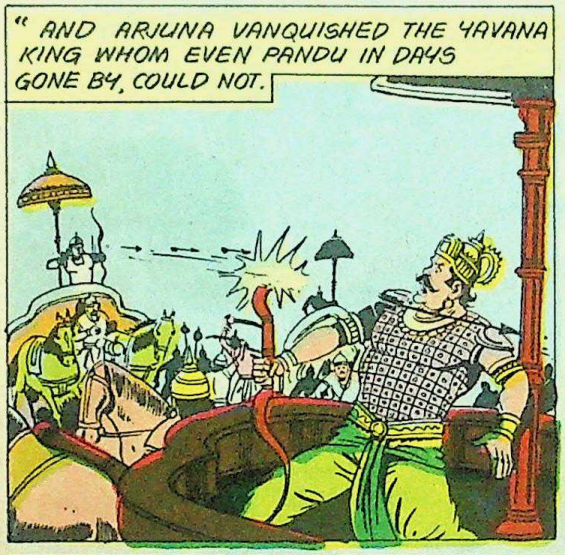

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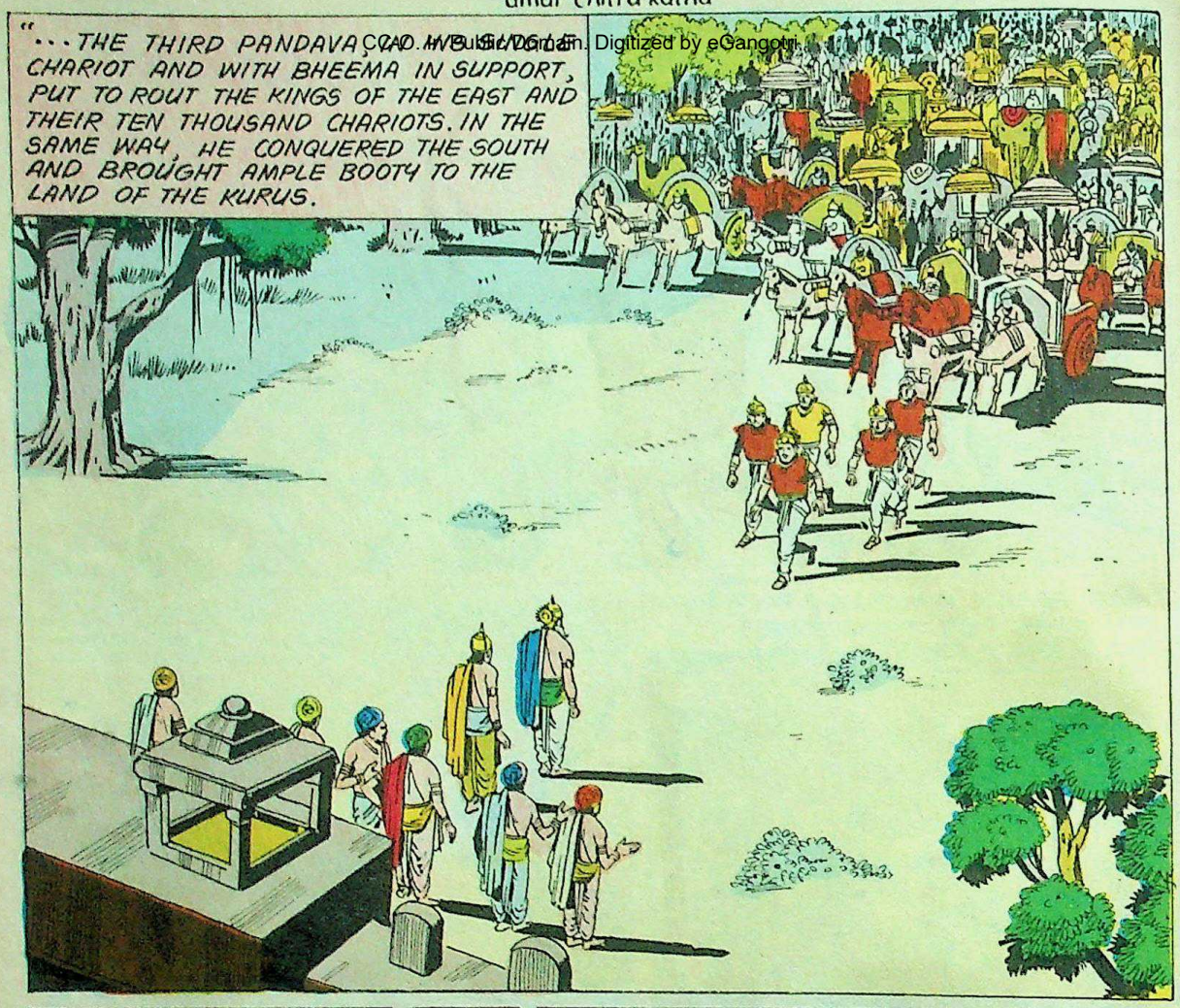

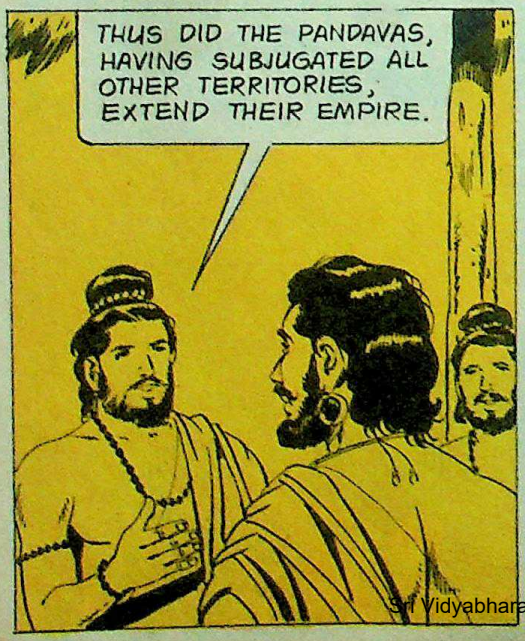

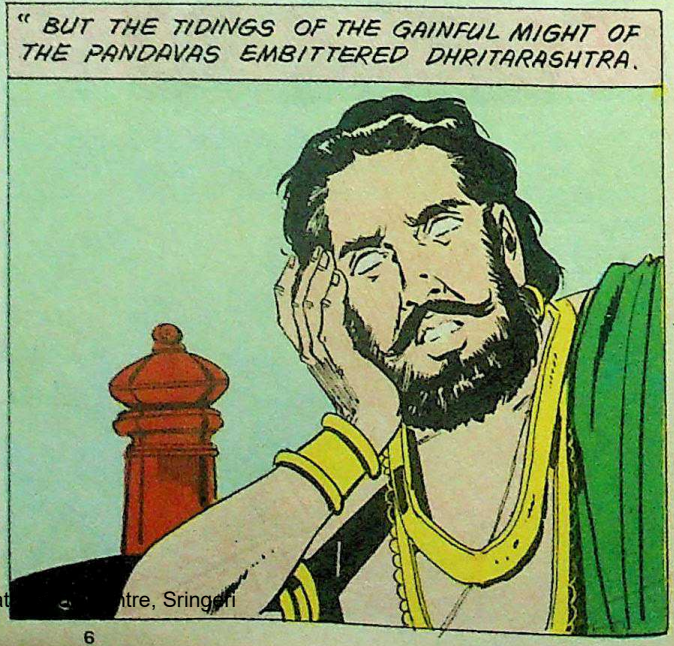

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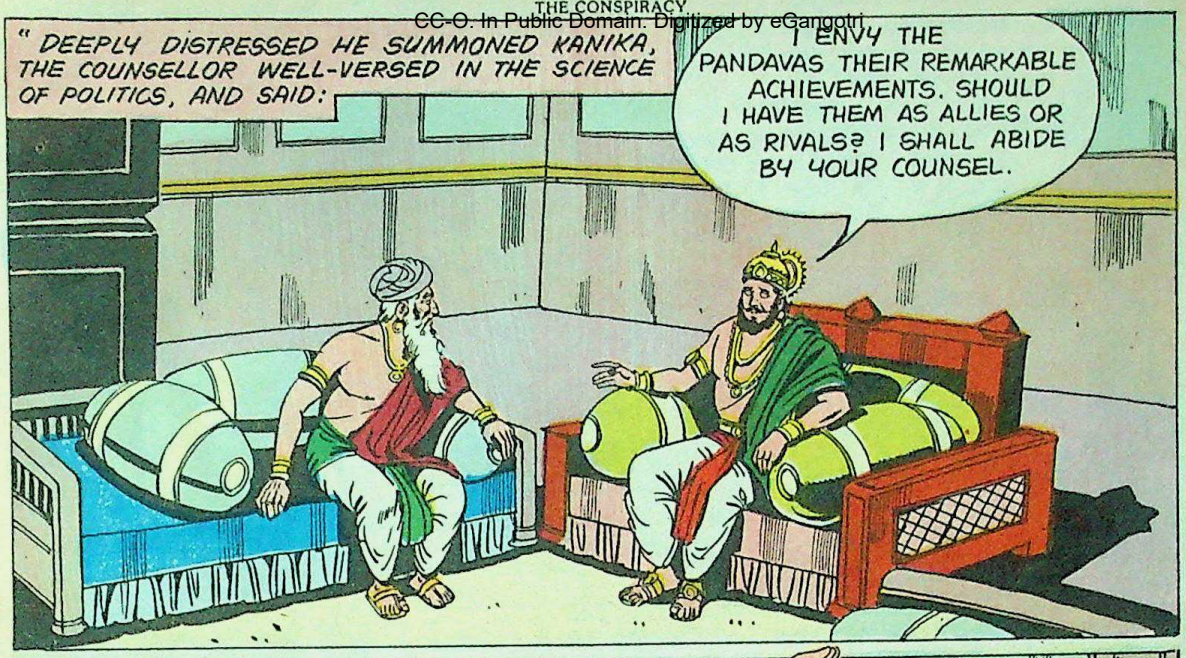

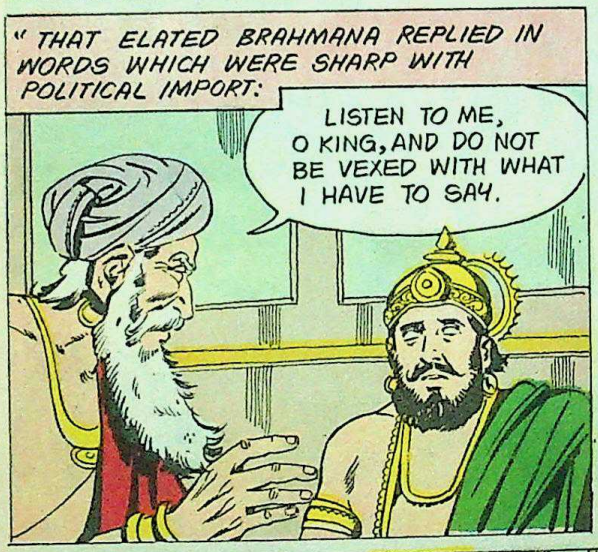

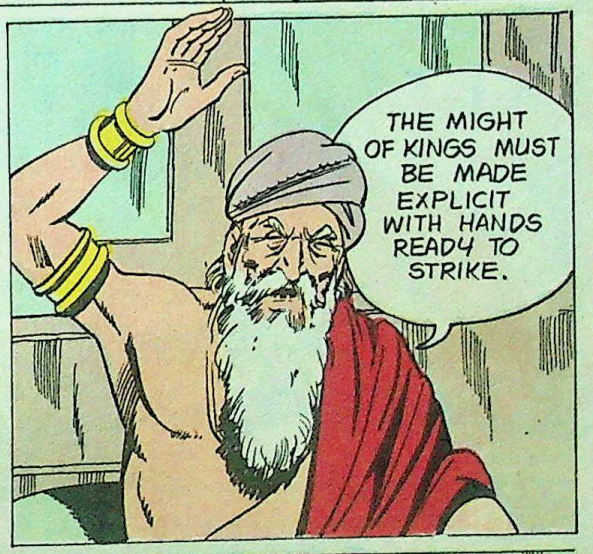

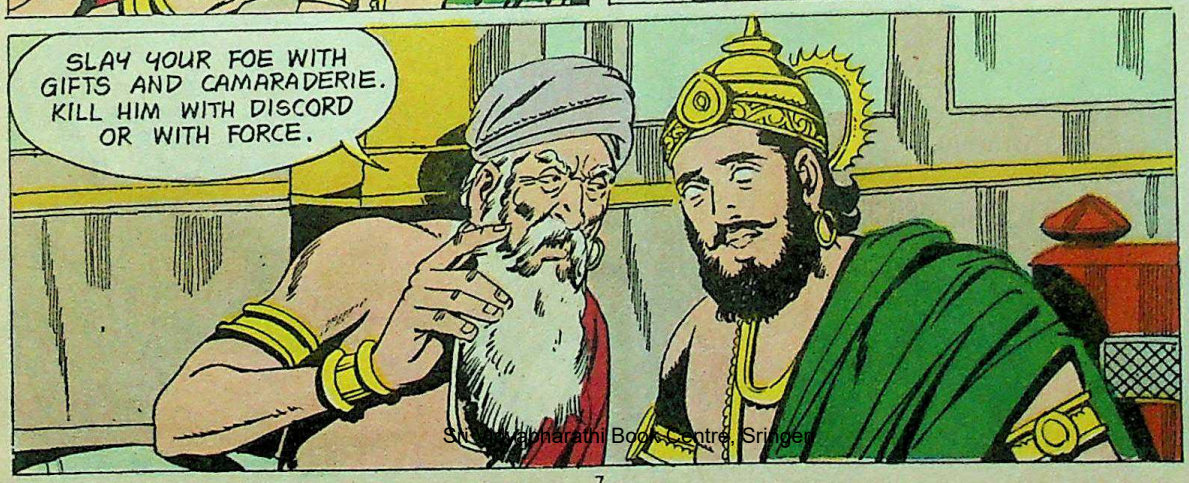

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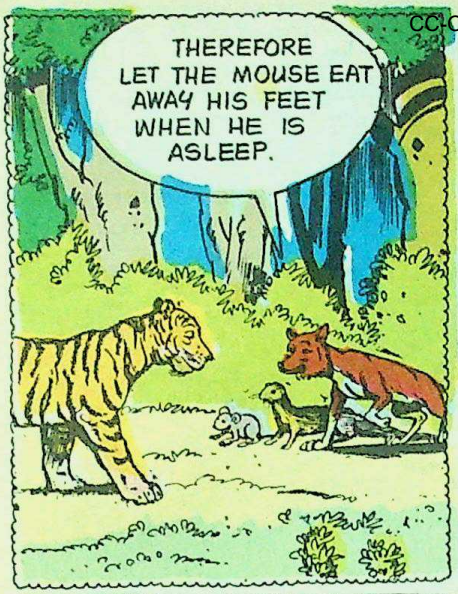

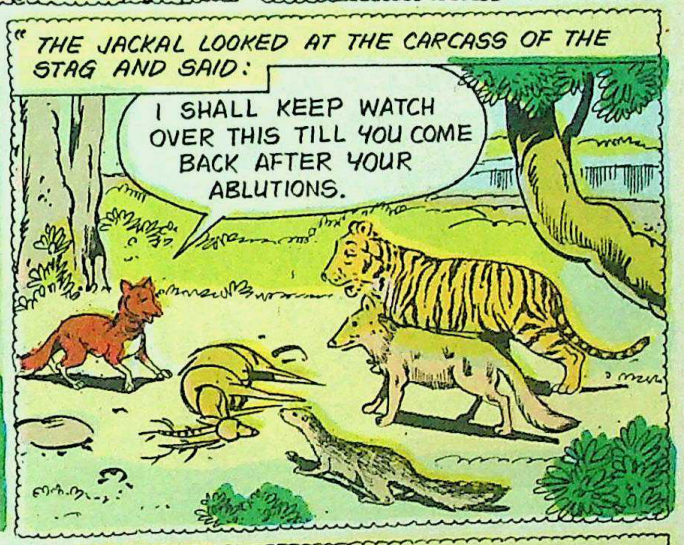

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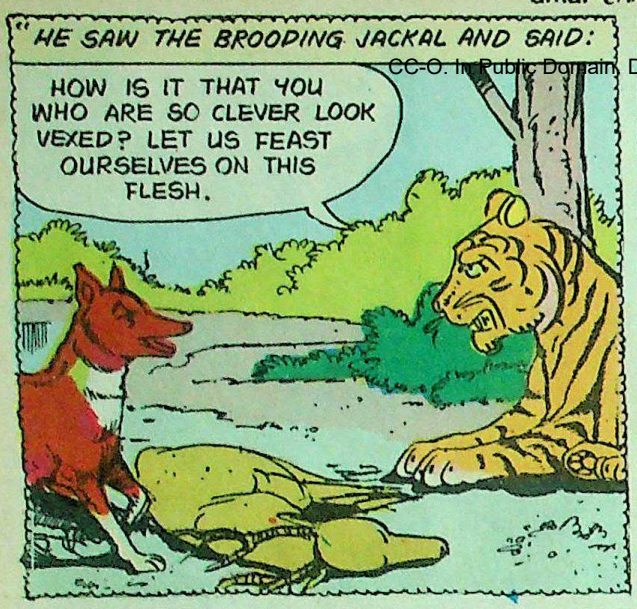

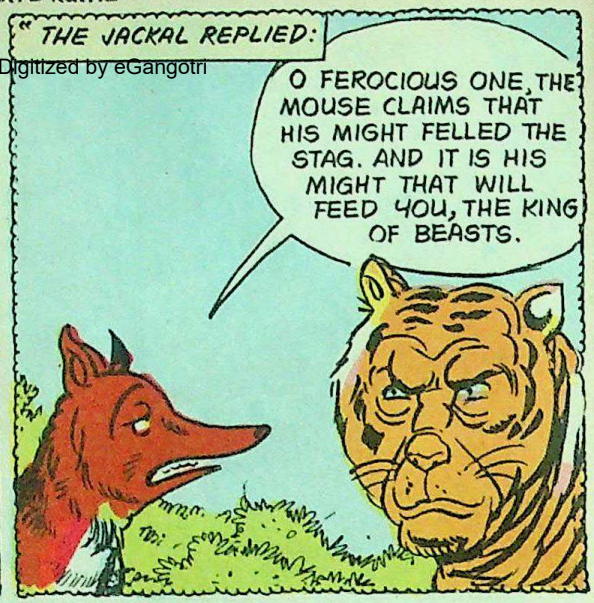

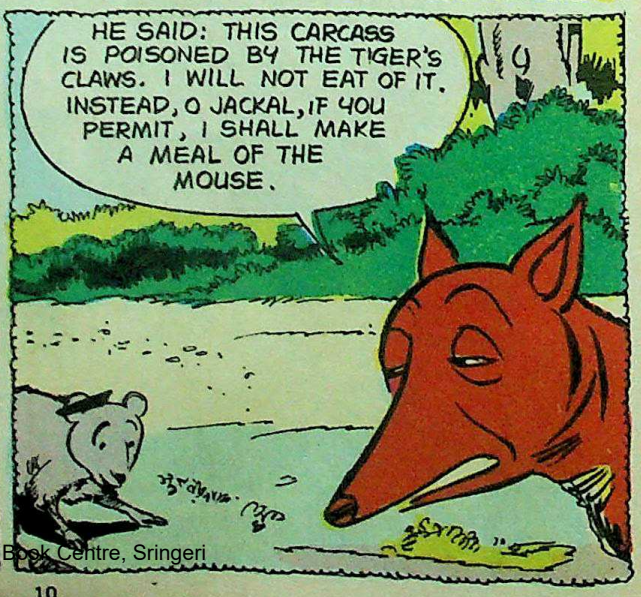

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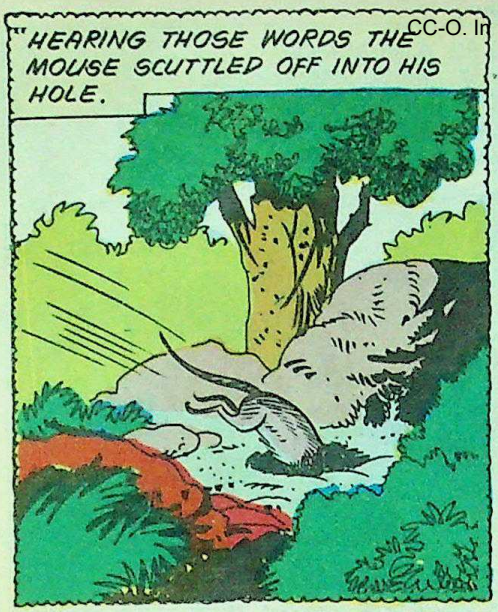

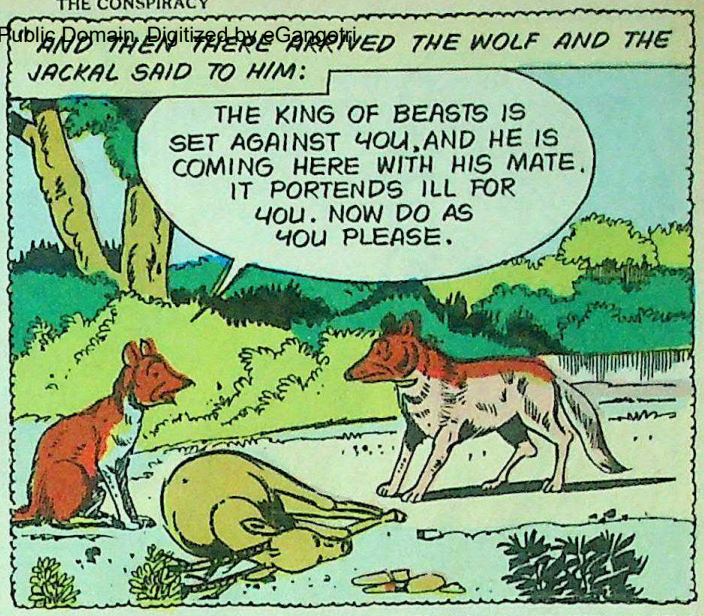

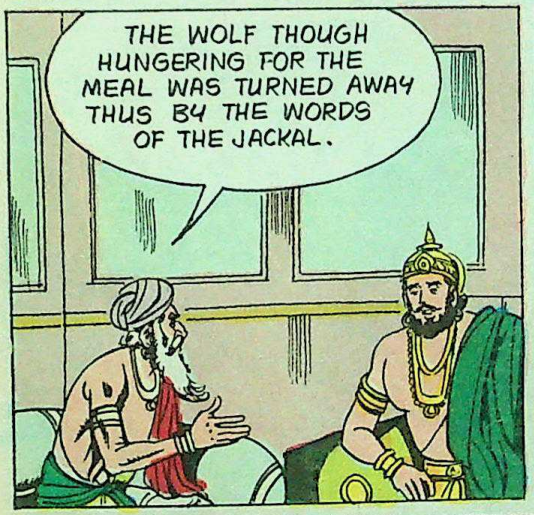

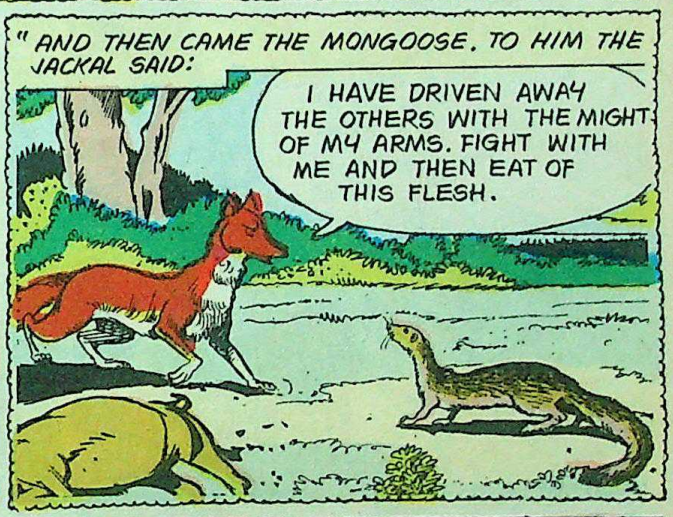

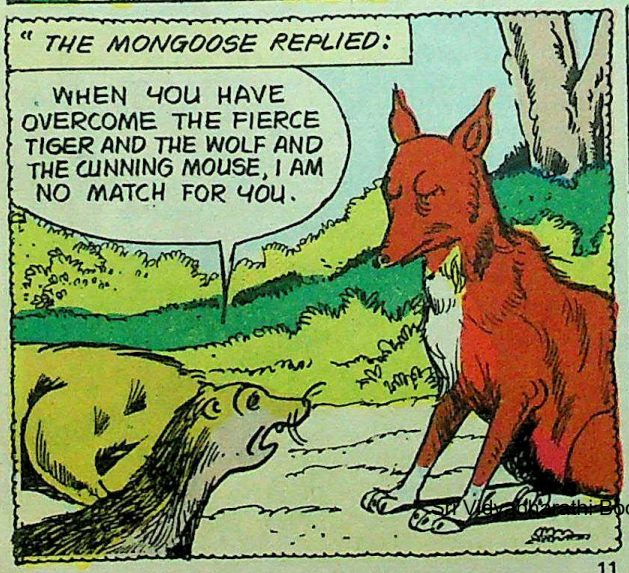

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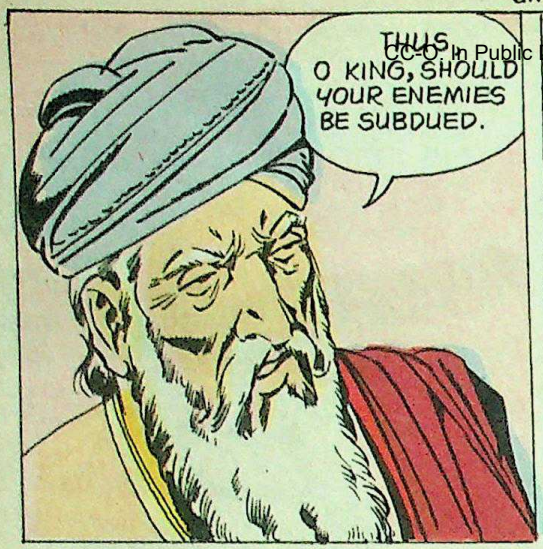

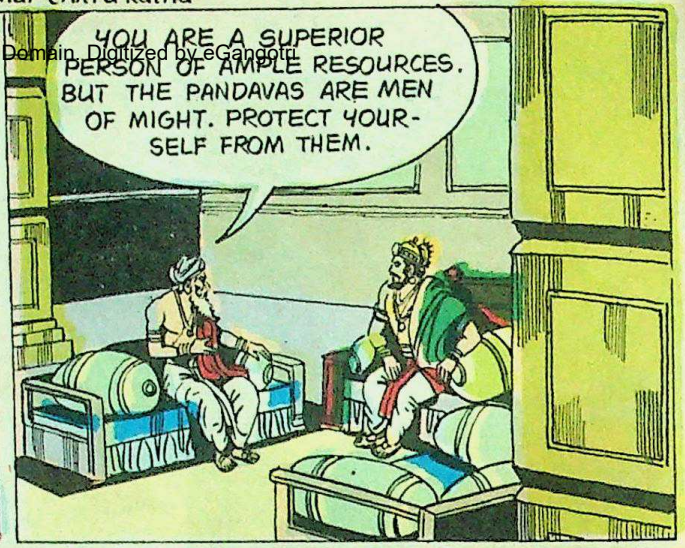

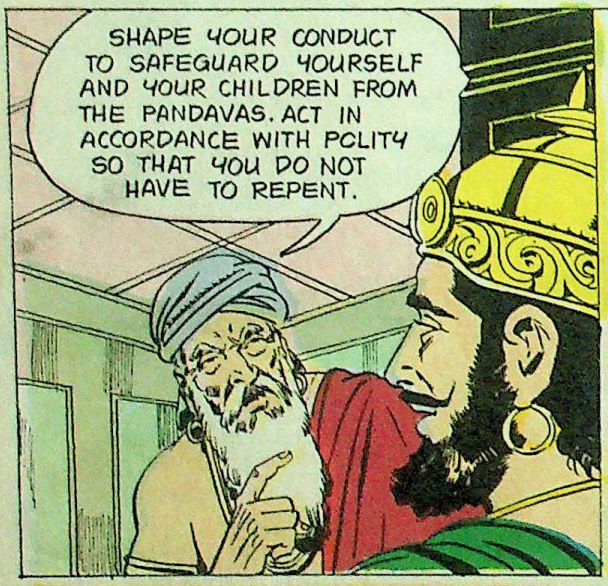

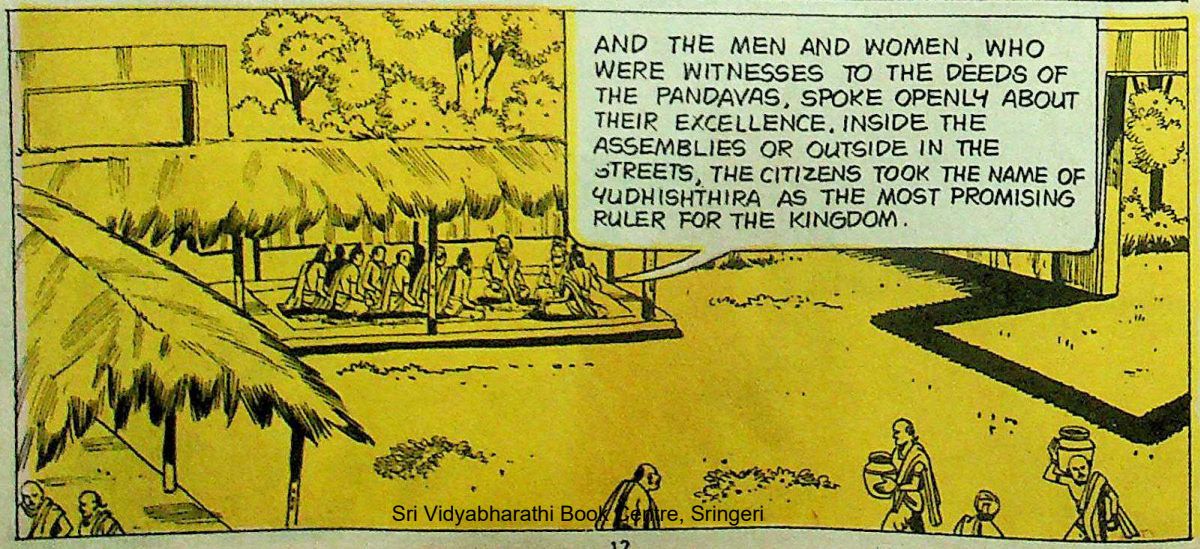

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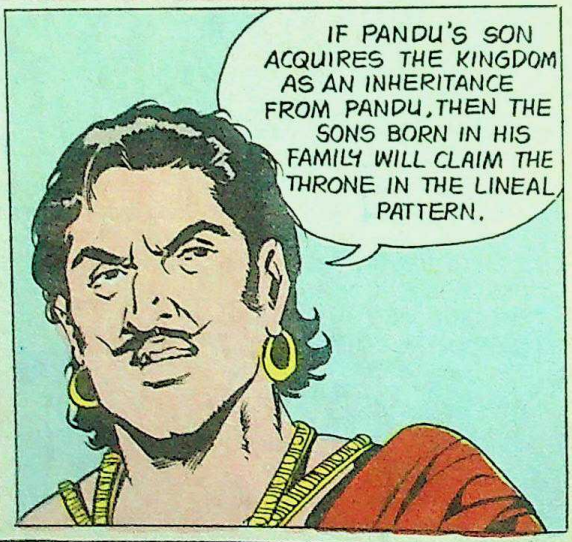
"DURYODHANA HEARD OF THESE REMARKS AND WAS SORELY VEXED BY THE PREFERENCE SHOWN FOR YUDHISHTHIRA. INTOLERANT AND JEALOUS HE WENT TO DHRITARASHTRA AND SAID:

O FATHER, CASTING YOU AND BHEESHMA ASIDE, THE CITIZENS WOULD HAVE YUDHISHTHIRA FOR THEIR KING. BHEESHMA WILL APPROVE OF THIS BECAUSE HE HAS RENOUNCED THE THRONE.



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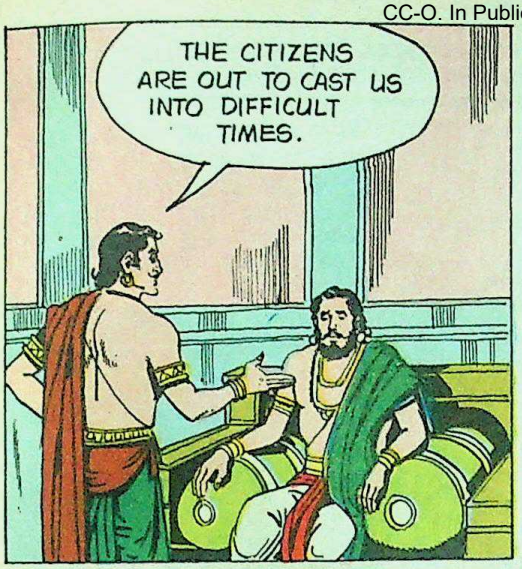

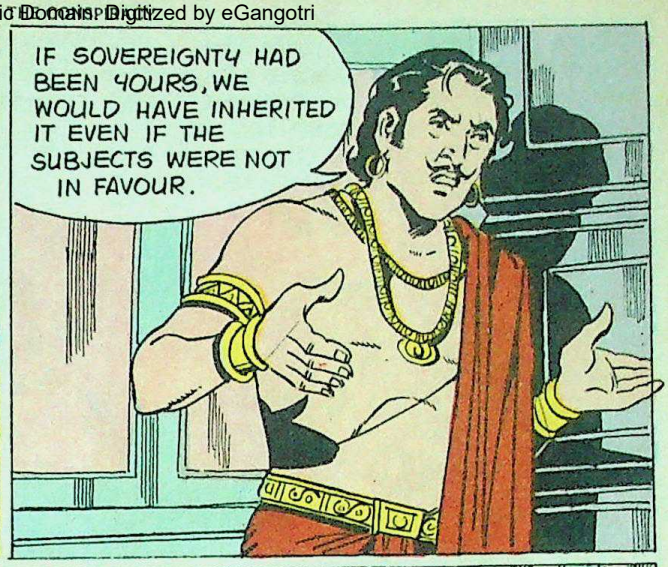

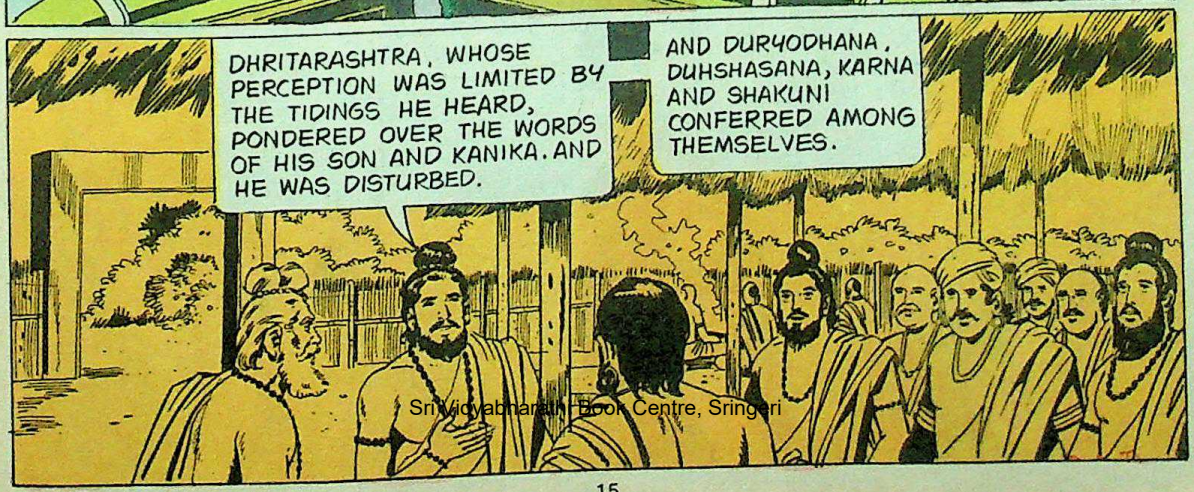

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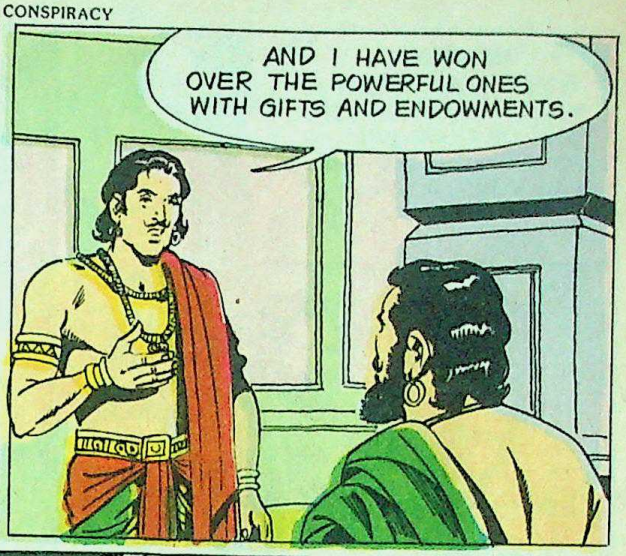

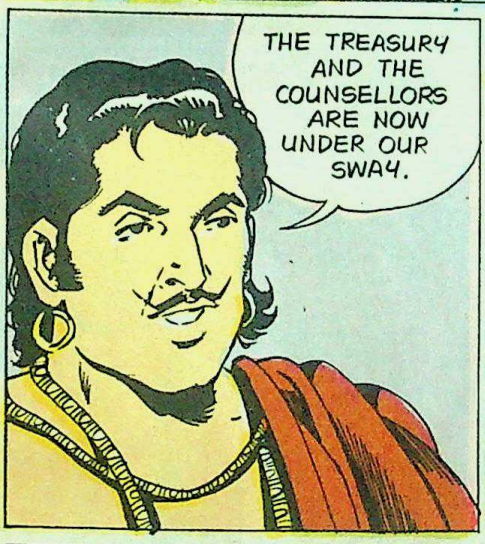

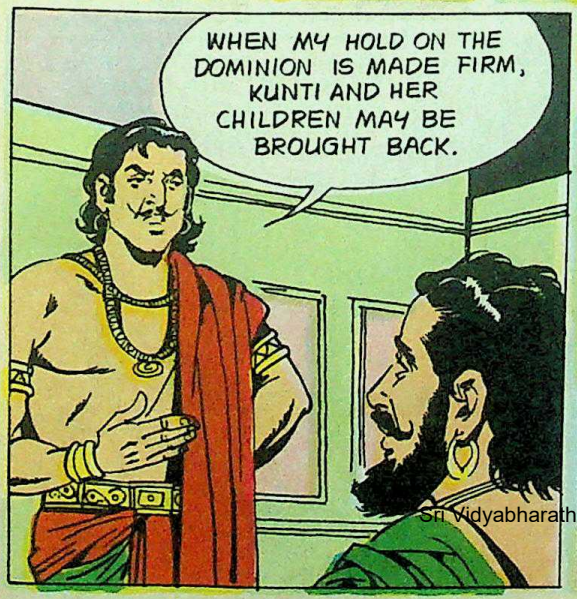

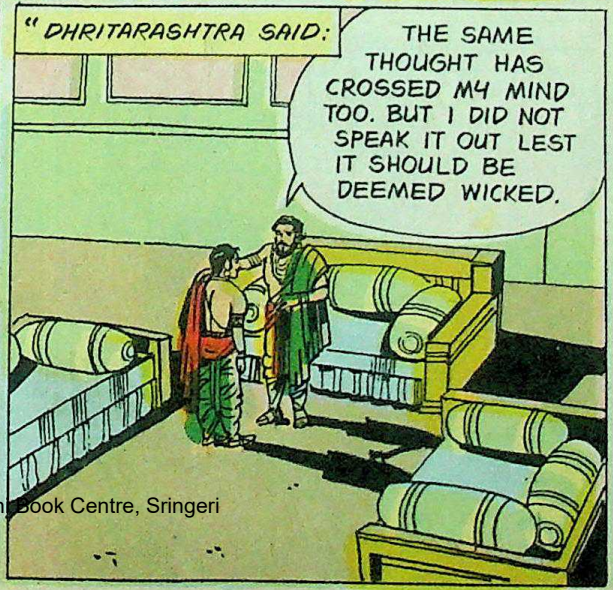

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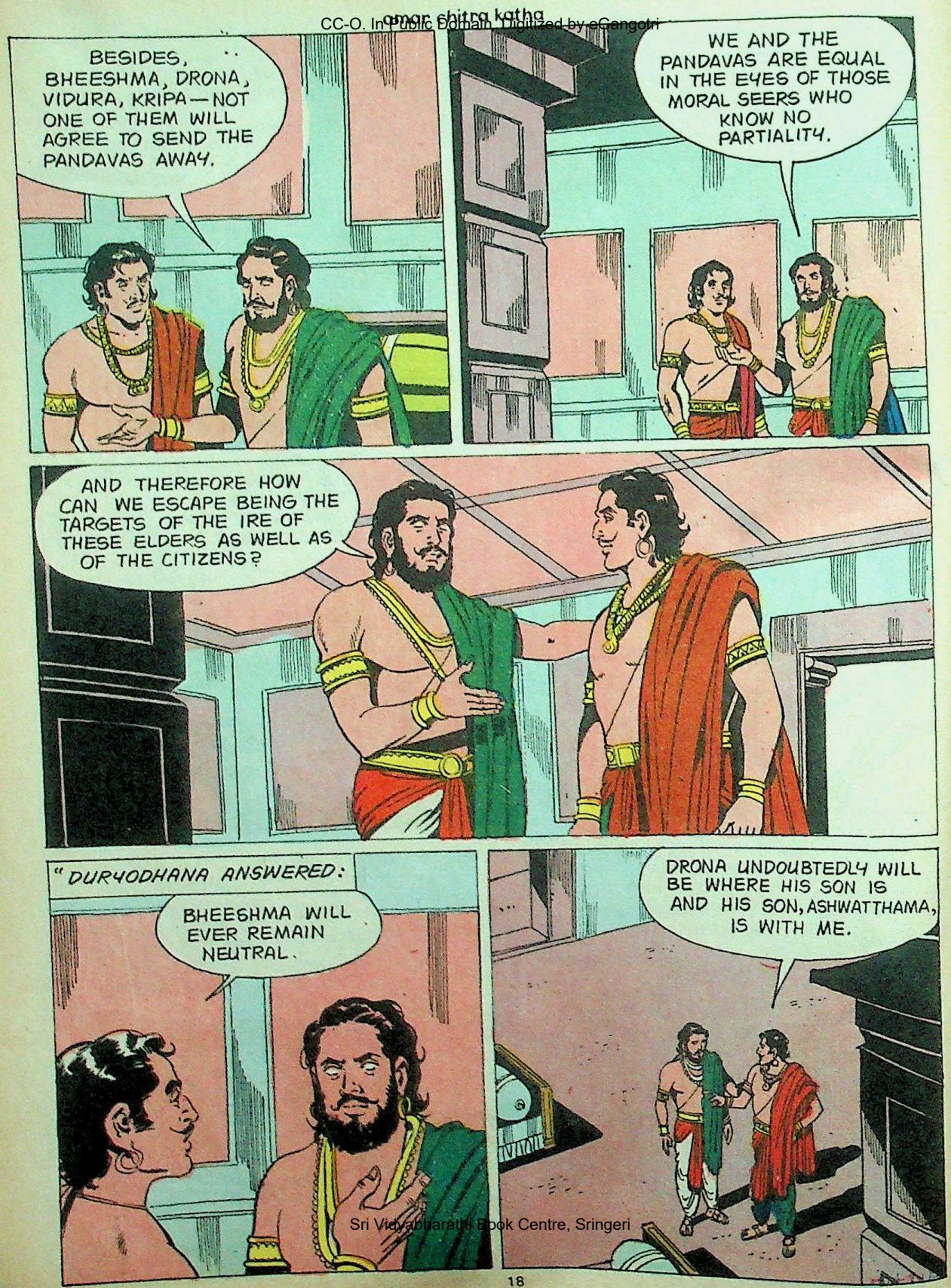

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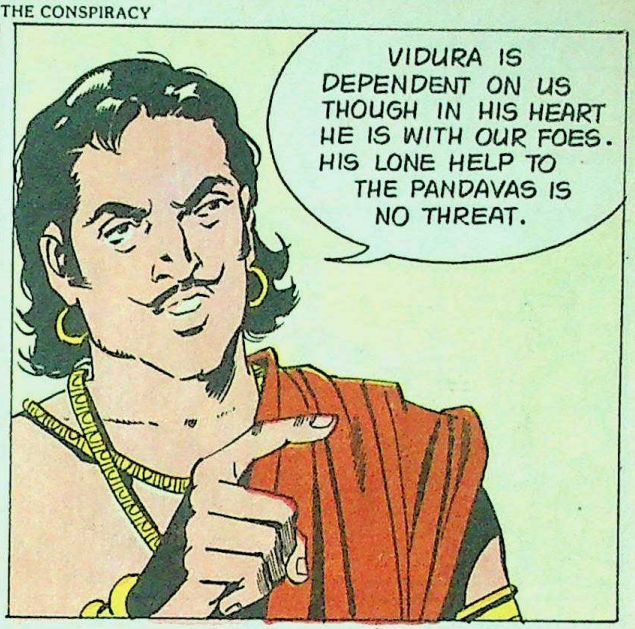

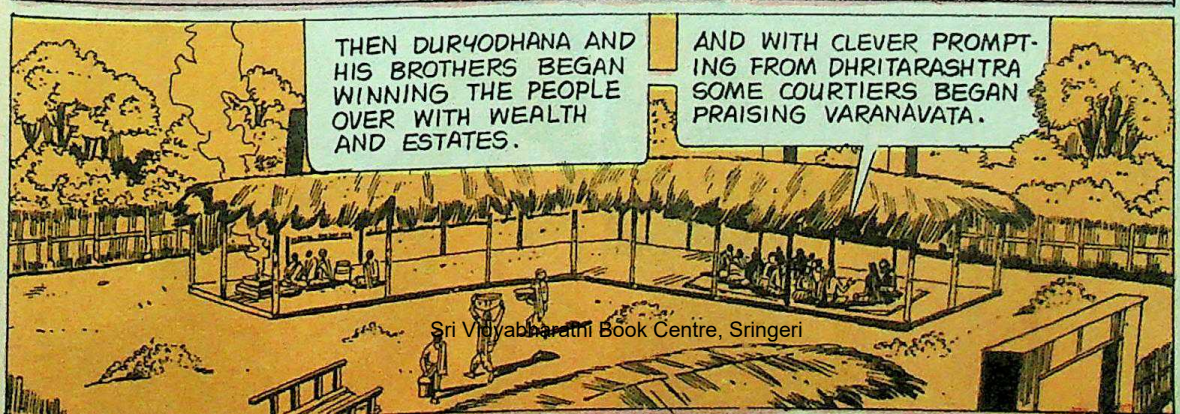

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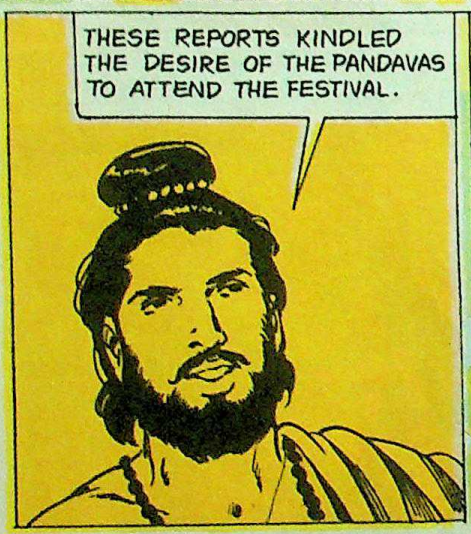

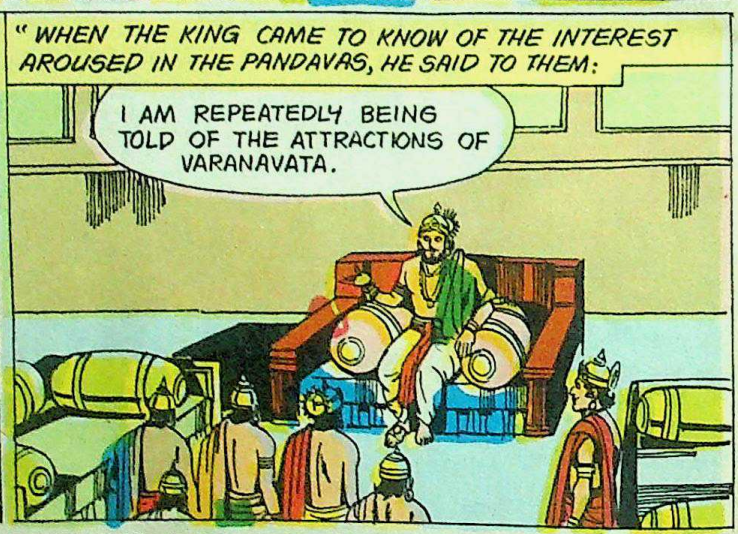

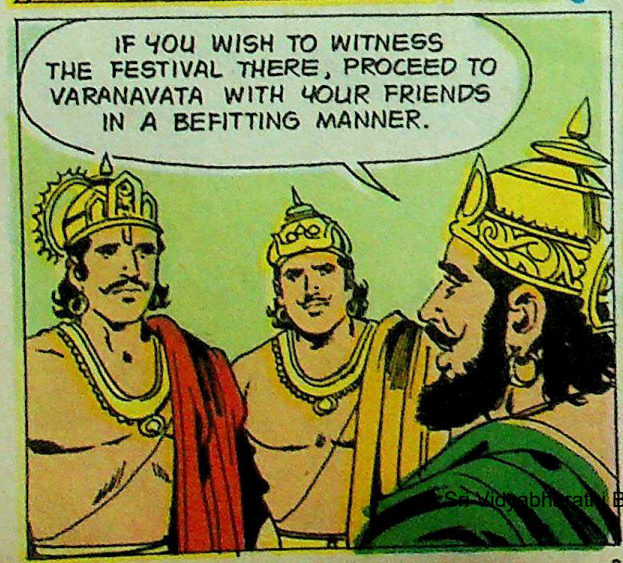

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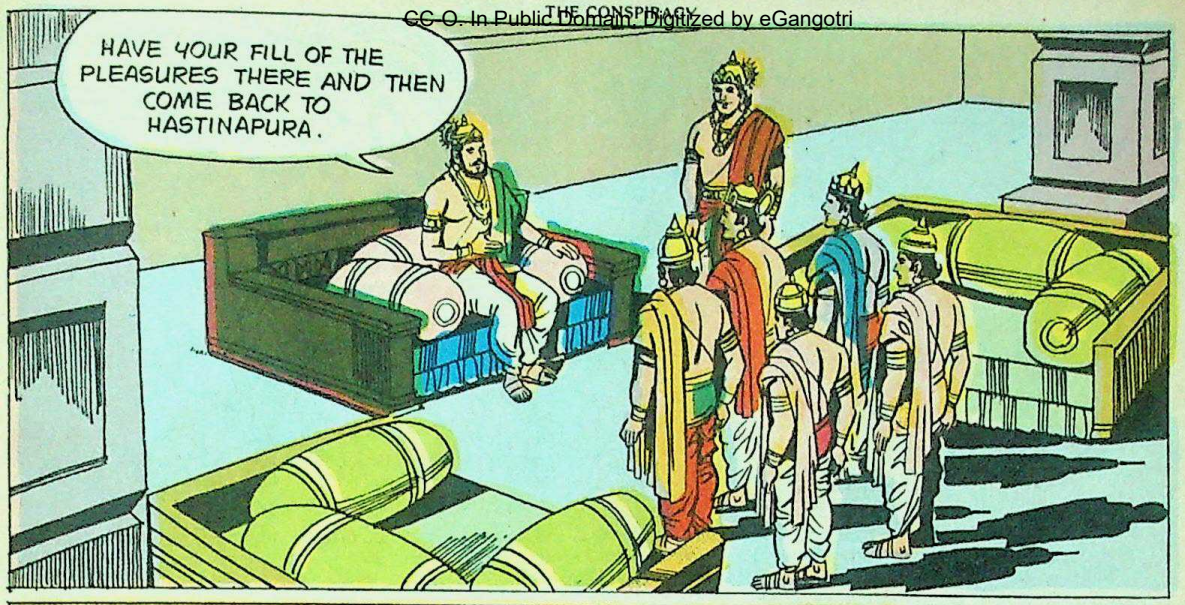

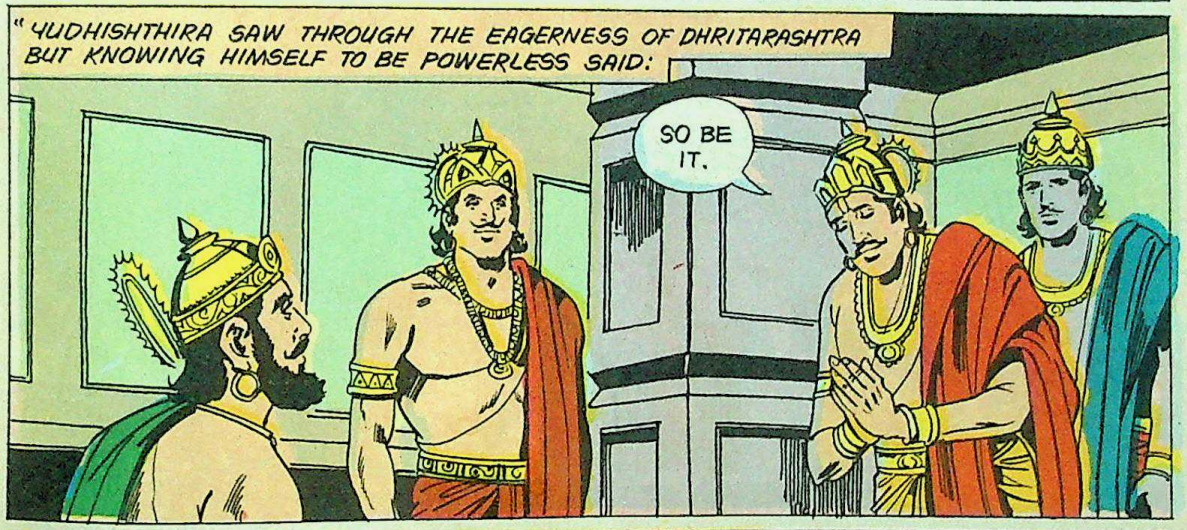

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"MEANWHILE ADDRESSING BHEESHMA, VIDURA AND DRONA AND KRIPA AND ASHWATTHAMA AND GANDHARI, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID IN ALL HUMILITY:

WE AND OUR RETINUE ARE GOING TO THE PLEASANT TOWN OF VARANAVATA AT THE COMMAND OF DHRITARASHTRA. SEE US OFF WITH WORDS OF GOODWILL AND FACES AGLOW WITH SMILES. YOUR BLESSINGS WILL WARD OFF ANY DANGER THERE FOR US.

"THE KURU ELDERS, PLEASED IN MIND, BLESSED THEM SAYING:

LET ALL THE ELEMENTS BE FAVOURABLE TO YOU ON YOUR WAY. NOTHING INCLEMENT SHALL BEFALL YOU.

THEN THE PANDAVAS BADE FAREWELL TO THE ELDERS, EMBRACED THEIR CONFRERES, ACCEPTED THE COURTEOUS REGARD OF THE CHILDREN, CIRCUMAMBULATED THE VENERABLE LADIES, AND TOUCHED THE FEET OF BHEESHMA, DHRITARASHTRA, DRONA, KRIPA, VIDURA AND OTHER ELDERS.

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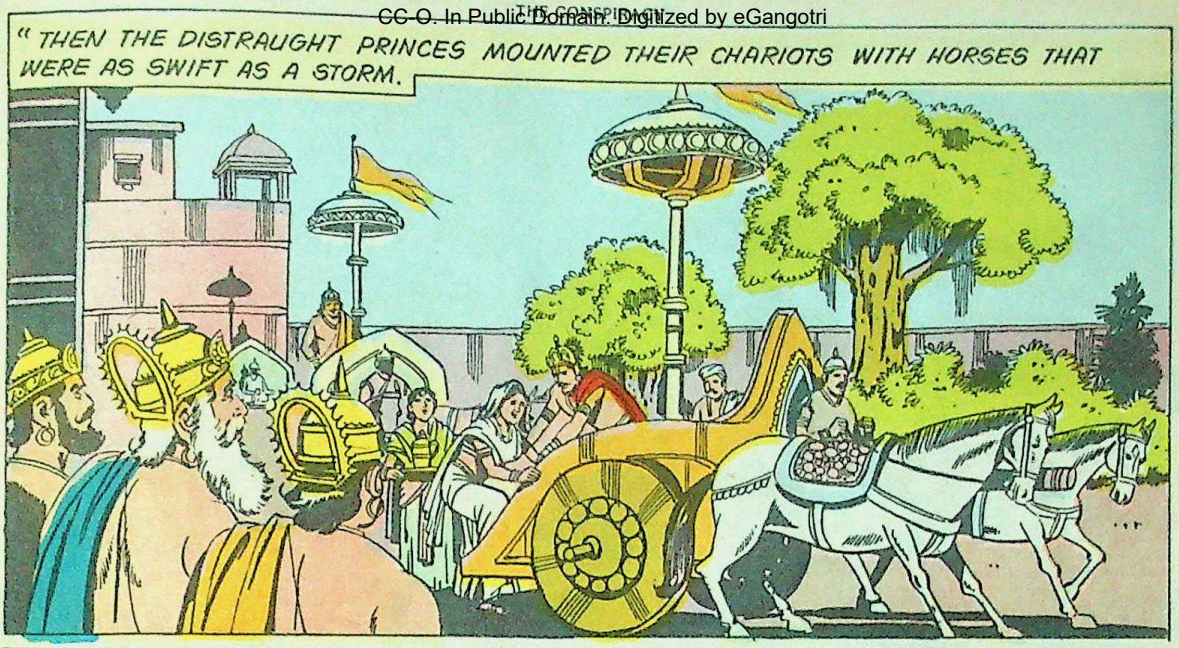

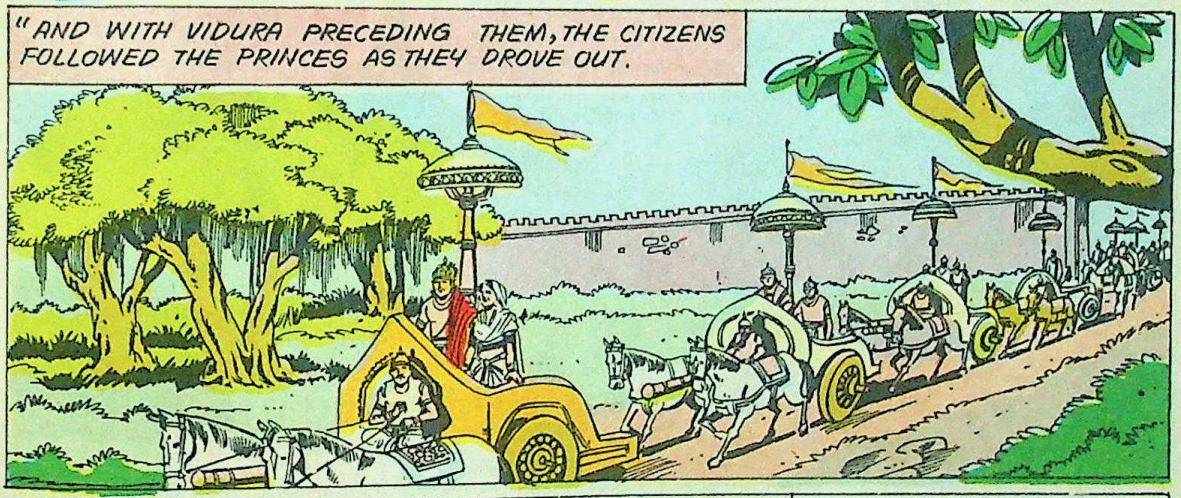

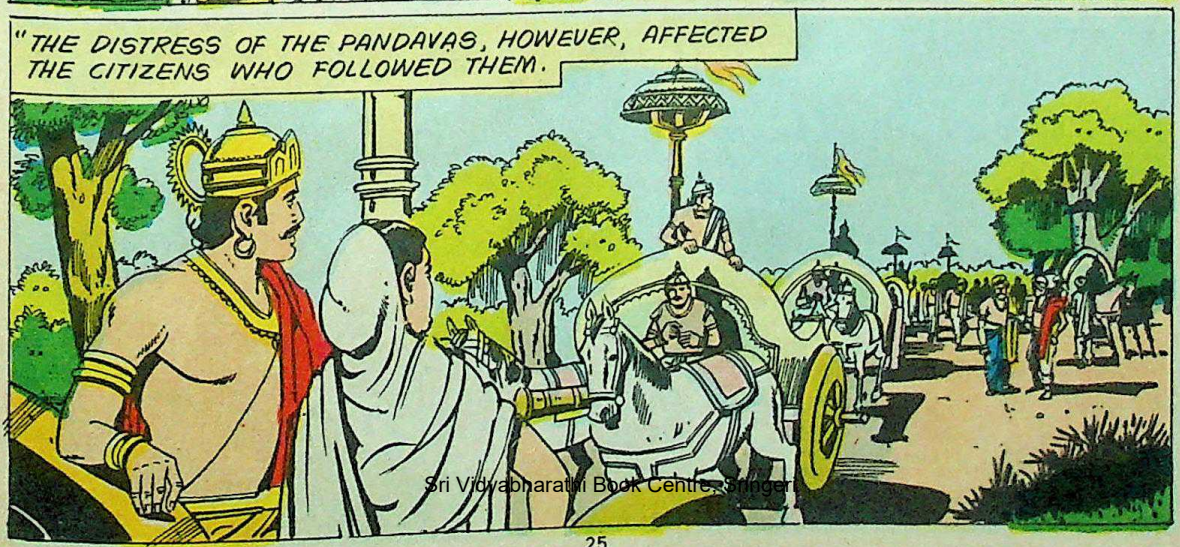

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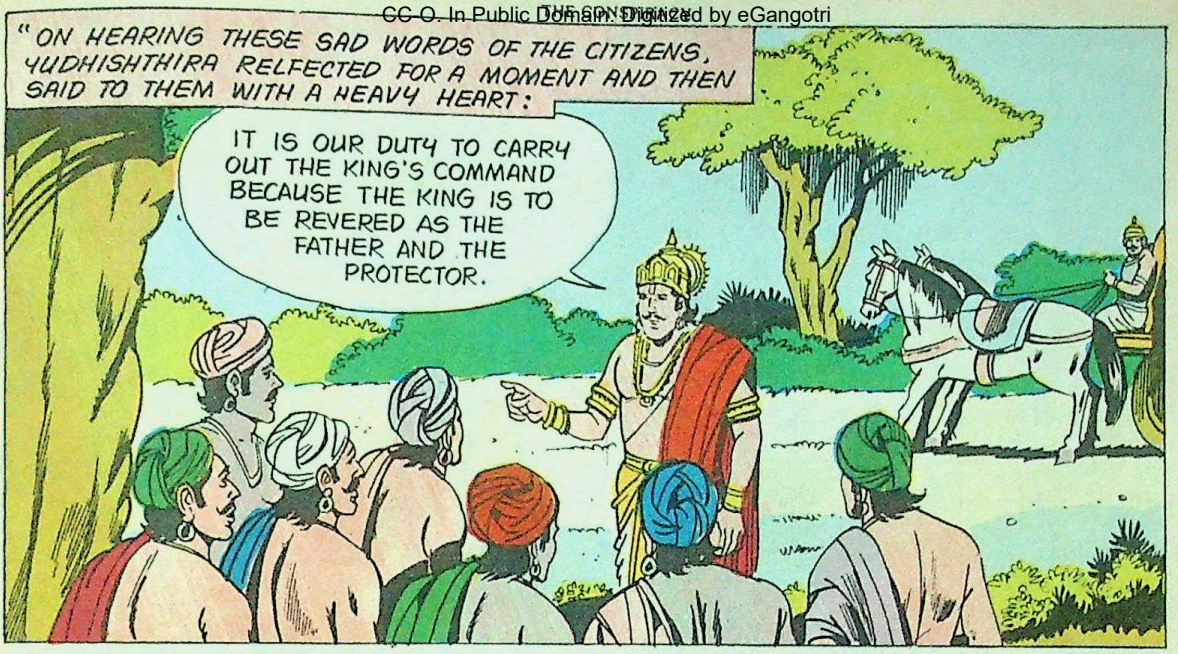

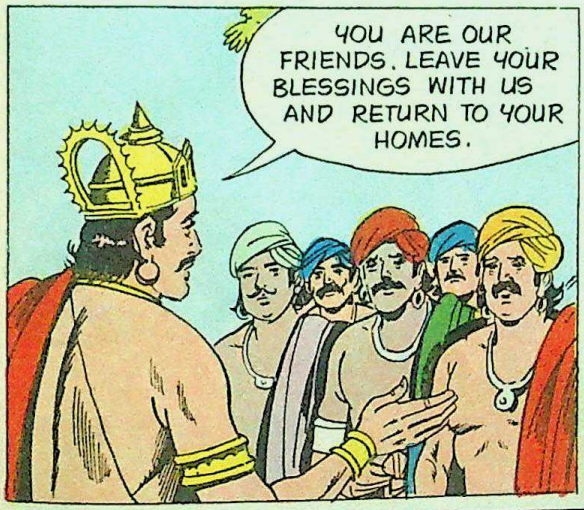

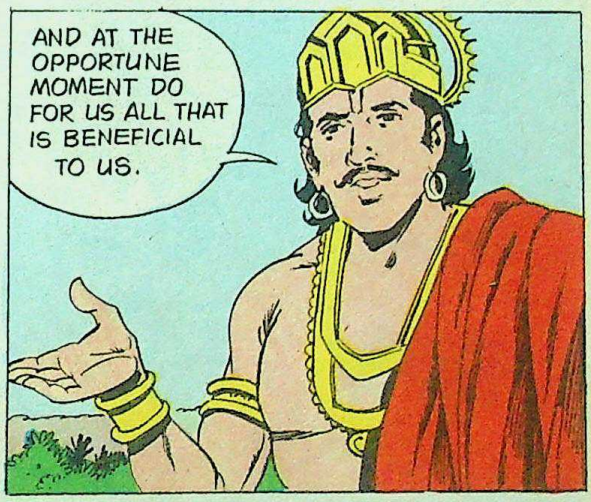

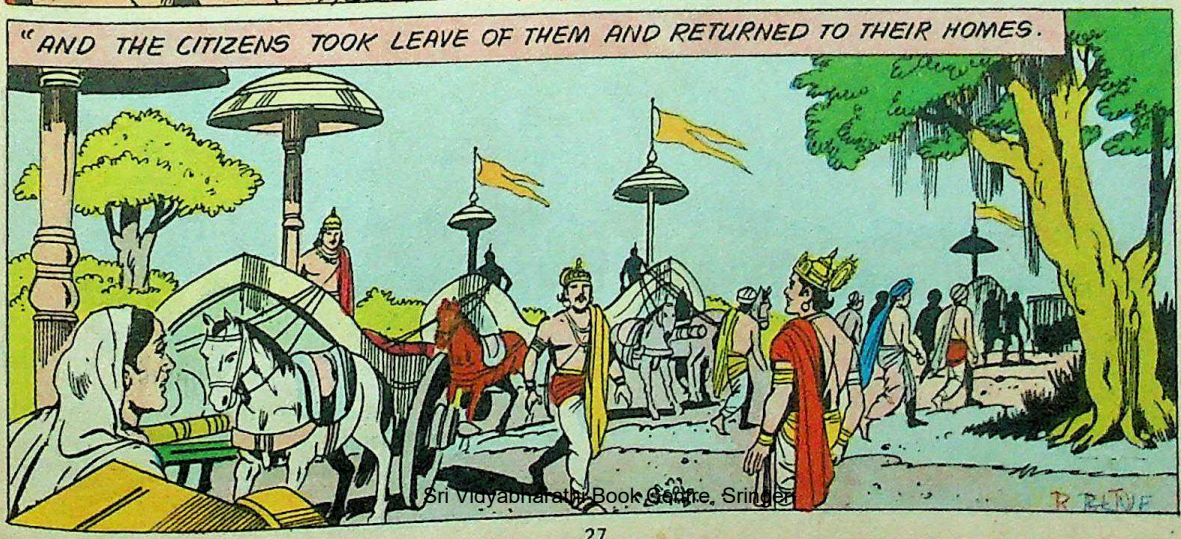

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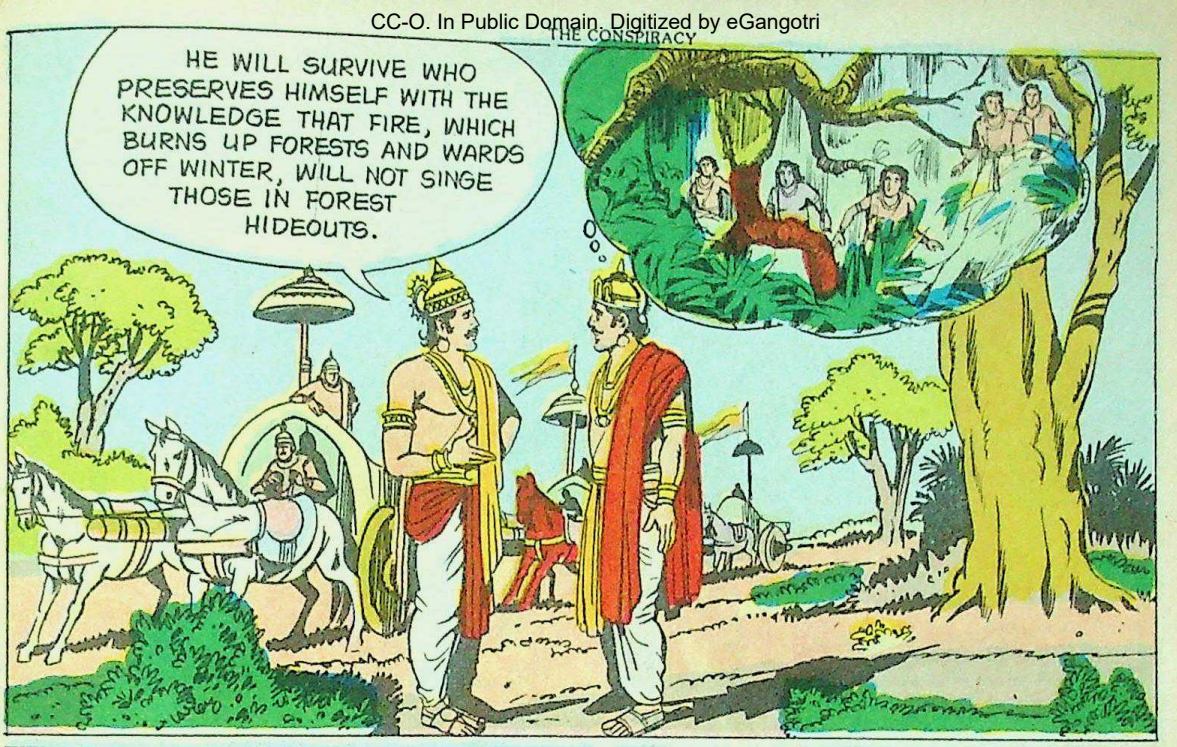

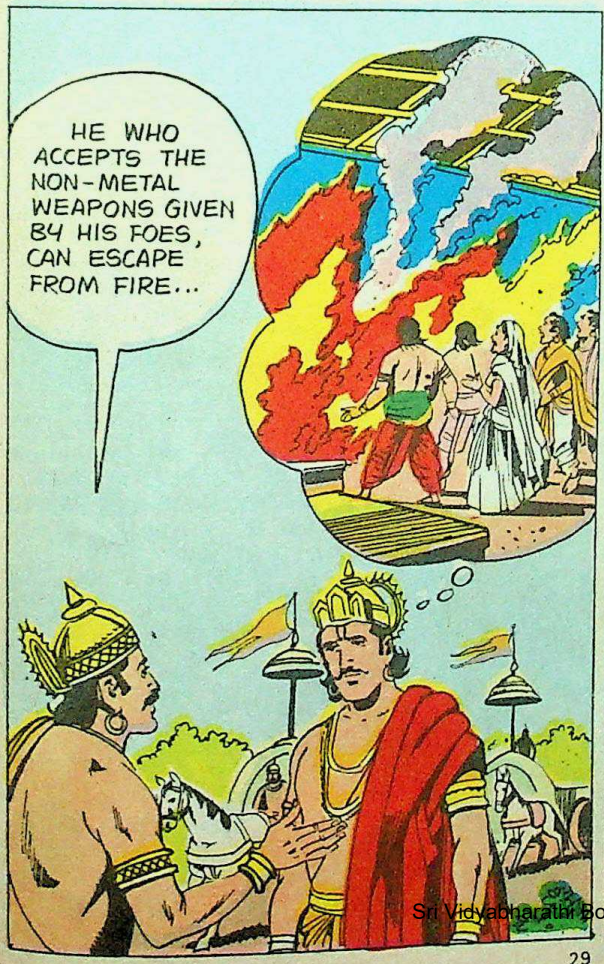

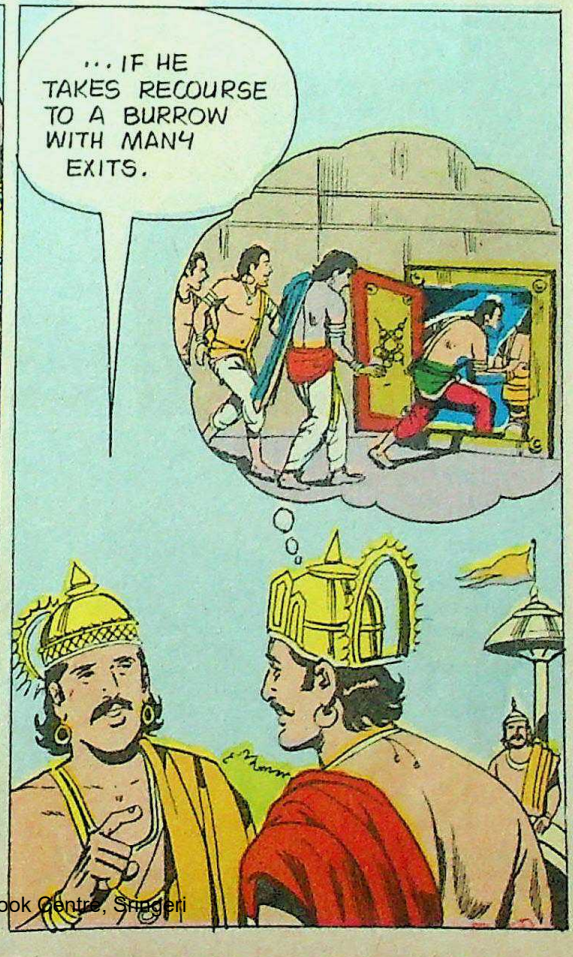

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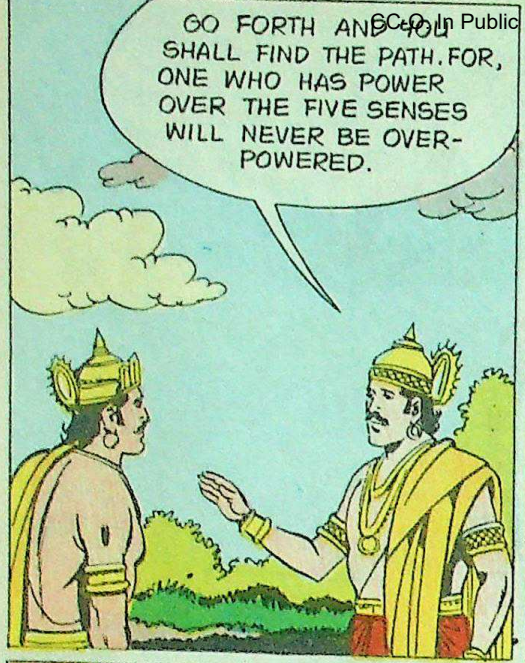

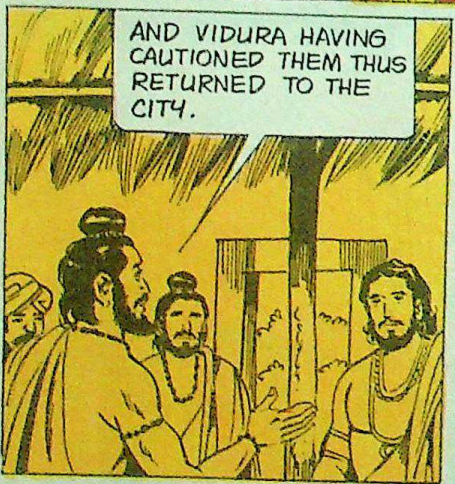

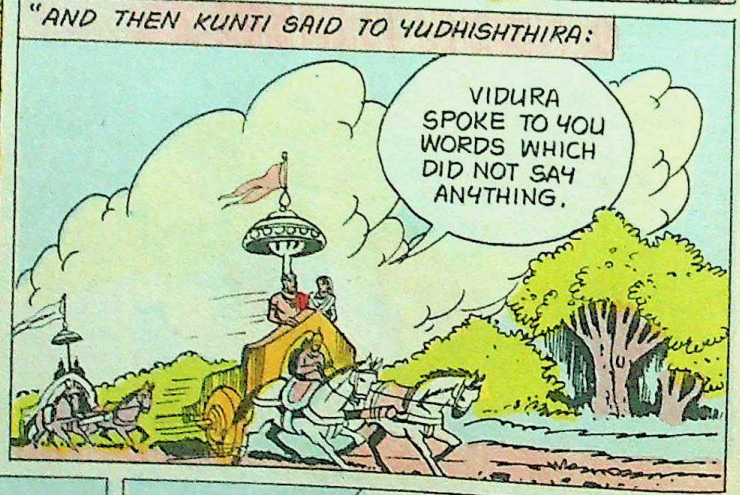

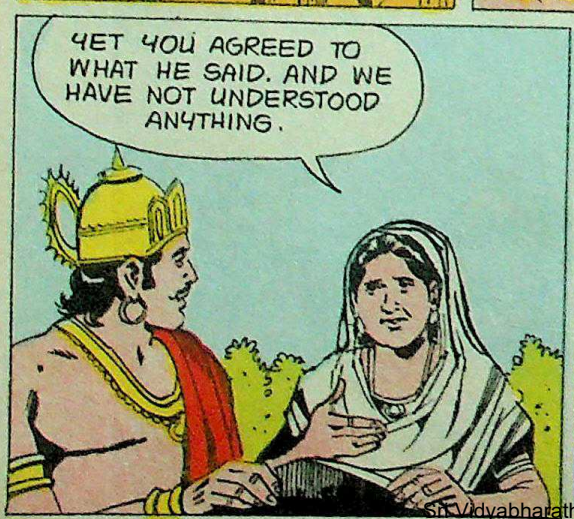

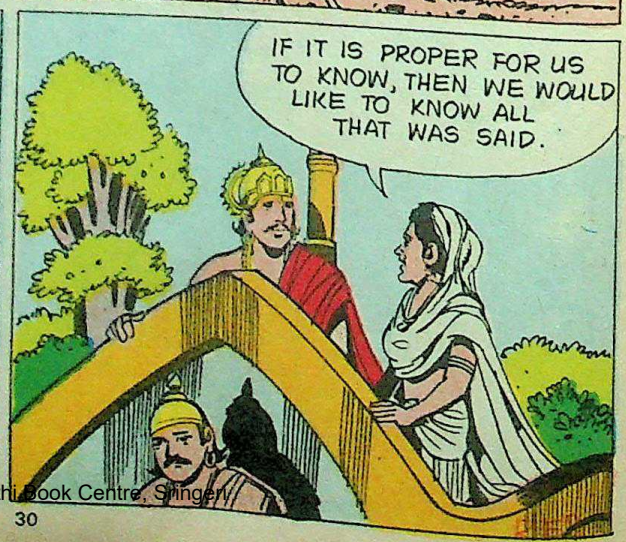

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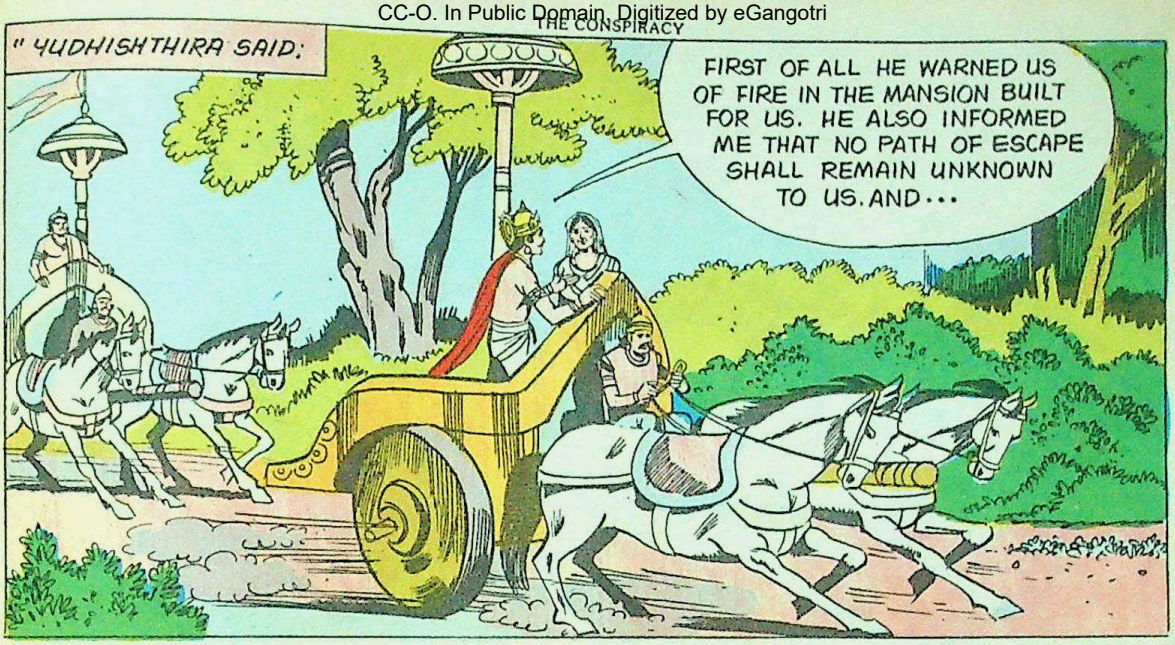

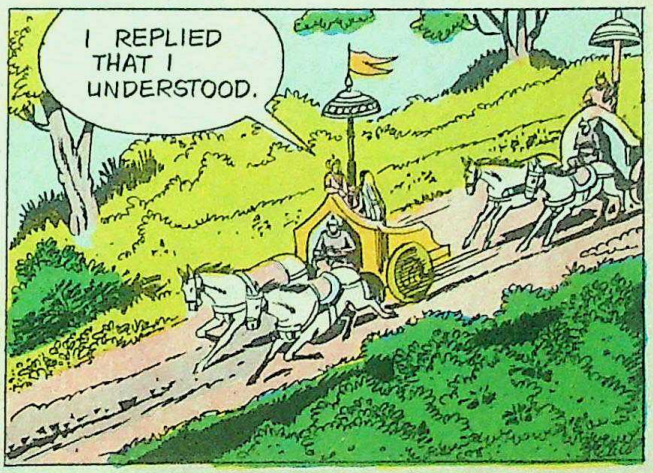

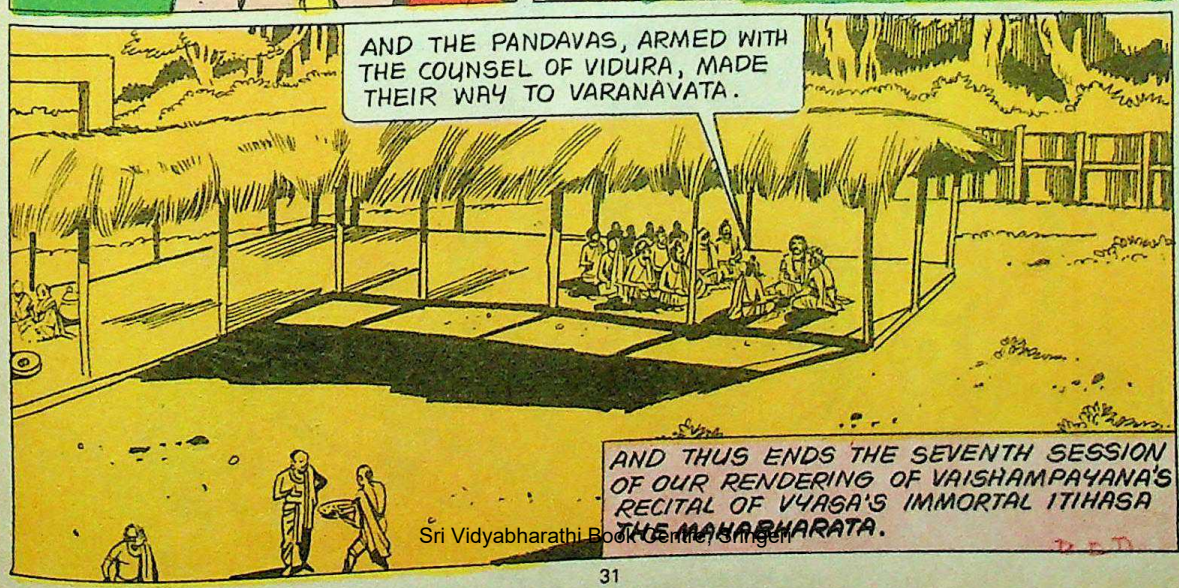

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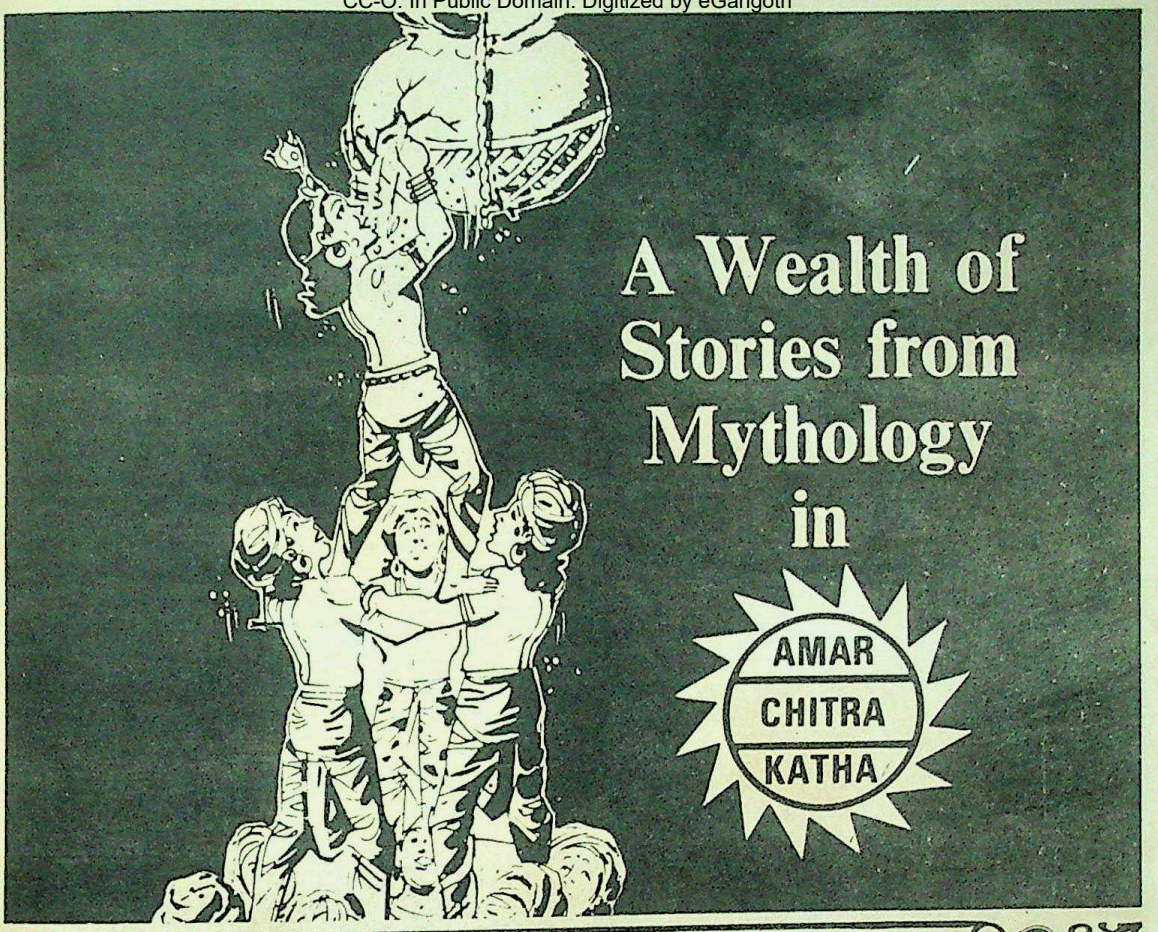

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13 THE PANDAVA PRINCES
14 SAVITRI
15 RAMA
16 NALA DAMAYANTI
17 HARISCHANDRA
18 THE SONS OF RAMA
19 HANUMAN
20 MAHABHARATA
26 KARNA
29 SHIVA PARVATI
34 BHEESHMA
35 ABHIMANYU
38 PRAHLAD
42 PARASHURAMA
58 SURYA
67 THE LORD OF LANKA
88 GANGA
89 GANESHA
111 SATI AND SHIVA
122 ANCESTORS OF RAMA
127 THE GITA
130 GARUDA
160 TALES OF VISHNU
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